

THE MOURITS MOURITSEN FAMILY

**A RECORD OF
HIS POSTERITY
AND
HIS ANCESTORS**

**Compiled and Edited
by
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and
Jerald Olean Seelos
from materials prepared and submitted
by the Mourits Mouritsen Family Organization**

This book is affectionately dedicated to Mary Elizabeth Mouritsen Griffiths and Leah Mouritsen Wright. These two daughters of Mourits Mouritsen, the oldest and the youngest, have served their father and this family with an extra portion. Like treasured bookends at either end of the family, their loving care and concern have reached out to encompass all family members spanning more than a century.

Introduction

The last few years in America have brought a resurgence of interest in family history and our roots — since all of us (except the American Indian) are imports if we go back far enough. Our family is no exception. It has been our desire to place our family history on the shelf along with those other volumes that document the histories of the Mormon pioneers. Our children and grandchildren, who witnessed the beginnings of space travel and who will belong more certainly to the next century than to this one, will remember less and less of the family saga, if we don't pause now to put it in print for permanent preservation.

At the annual Mouritsen Reunion held at Smithfield, Utah in June 1975, Willard Mouritsen raised the issue that perhaps the annual reunions of his father's family had outgrown their value. Many of the younger family members knew very few of their "cousins," and the attendance and interest seemed to be waning. It seemed the ideal opportunity to propose that perhaps we could rekindle our family ties by directing our interest towards gathering our genealogical and family records. It was agreed that family members would make annual contributions for genealogical research and for the printing and distribution of this genealogy and other family records. Carrie Jones, my aunt, agreed to serve with me on a continuing basis to provide continuity to this project.

Three years later we began to recognize that our efforts would be better rewarded by a formal publication of the family records. This idea was discussed at our 1978 Family Reunion and received gratifying support from those present. Hence we began in earnest to compile material for this volume.

Chapters II, III, and IV record the offspring of our pioneer ancestor, Mourits Mouritsen, tracing his posterity forward. Here we can look at six generations — from Mourits down to his third great-grandchildren. At this time the family of Mourits has grown well over eight hundred descendants, and we are just beginning the sixth generation. When you consider that some families actually die out and become extinct, our family is truly flourishing.

For this section of the book we established the following guidelines:

1. The histories are organized by families rather than by generations.

2. Mourits Mouritsen and his three wives are considered the first generation; their children are the second generation; grandchildren, the third generation, etc.

3. All descendants are represented by a *number*, identifying their placement in the family system. The number of characters in this ID number signifies to which generation the individual belongs; hence, a four-character ID indicates a member of the fourth generation or a great-grandchild of Mourits. The *first character* of the ID would be an *alpha character* as follows:

A — a descendant of Mourits and Mary Elizabeth Hillyard

B — a descendant of Mourits and Susan Elizabeth Wildman

C — a descendant of Mourits and Carrie Hansen

The use of an alpha character in any other position of the ID will signify A for 11, B for 12, etc. The other numbers indicate the order of birth in the parent's family. An *asterisk* (*) in front of the file numbers indicates there is also a *life history* for this individual in the book. To illustrate:

*A431 (4th generation, a great-grandchild)
├── The first child of
├── The third child of
├── The fourth child of
└── Mourits and Mary Elizabeth Hillyard

4. All family members that are married or single over twenty-one are to be represented as individuals; all younger family members will be listed with their parents.

5. Family group records are printed only for the first generation.

6. Only direct-line descendants are indexed in the book.

We encouraged full participation by all via letter, telephone, and word-of-mouth; it is regrettable that some did not submit material. Whenever

possible we have still tried to include them. We regret any unintentional error or omission. Because the majority of the Mouritsen family are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), this section is full of Mormon terminology (ward, MIA, mission, testimony, etc.) which may not have meaning to family members who are not Mormons.

Chapter V of this book examines the "roots" of our pioneer ancestor, tracing his line back to the seventeenth century of rural Denmark. This amounts to six generations of genealogy beyond Mourits. The material contained in Chapter V represents all of the research for which we contracted over a five-year period. It is included here so that family members can avoid duplication of efforts. We traced all direct lines as far as possible based on available sources.

Chapter VI represents a collection of stories, poems, and articles of interest as written and submitted by family members. I find them interesting and enlightening because they provide background and color to our family record; and through them one glimpses the individual personalities and talents that collectively comprise a personality for the Mouritsen family.

Obviously this project would not have been possible without the backing of the entire family. We acknowledge that the support has been exceptional in many different ways. To each of you who did your part and more, we express heartfelt appreciation.

I would be remiss in not acknowledging the driving force that Carrie has been in this project. She personally typed the entire manuscript presented to the printer. Her organizational skills and thorough follow-up have kept the entire project moving. We also express appreciation to our spouses, Karin and Kline, and to our chil-

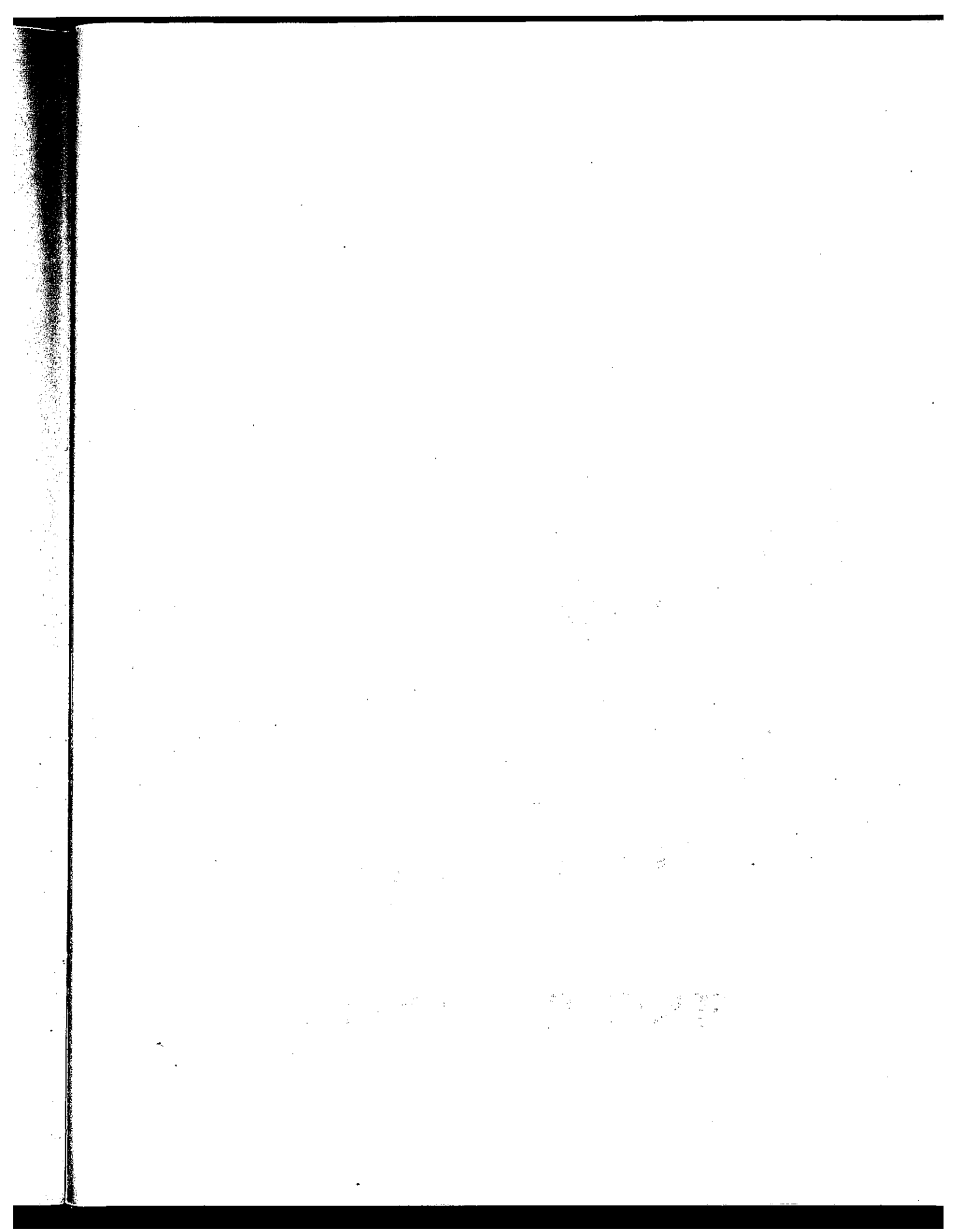
dren, without whose patience, support, and encouragement we would not have been able to devote the time necessary to complete this task.

Many have asked what motivated us to volunteer for such a project. Carrie and I talked about this, and we decided there should be something in writing for the posterity of Mourits and for our posterity to record the special heritage we all enjoy by being a member of the Mouritsen family. We also thought such a written history would further tie together and bind the Mouritsen family. And, last but not least, both of us concluded that we did it for Olean and Afton. It was from them we inherited our respect for our Mouritsen name and heritage, our love of family, our desire to serve, and our determination to give one hundred ten percent.

Jerry Seelos
May 15, 1982



Jerry Seelos and Carrie M. Jones.



CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY OF MOURITS MOURITSEN

Mourits Mouritsen



Pioneers

They cut desire into short lengths
And fed it to the hungry fires of courage,
Long after — when the flames died
Molten gold gleamed in the ashes.
They gathered it into bruised palms
And handed it to their children,
And their children's children.

Vilate Raile

Used by permission of the late author's husband, Dr. Henry Raile.

There are relatively few left in the family who personally knew the pioneer from whom we are all descended. In fact, the opportunity to ask questions and discover facts of a personal or historical nature about this man will soon be out of reach altogether. This history represents as much as we knew first-hand, could discover by research, or thought to ask about the man at this time. For those many questions and thoughts that will be raised later that will lead to additional facts, we regret they could not be included here.

Our story actually begins in Denmark, the native land of our ancestor. Denmark consists of the peninsula of Jutland and many islands. At the northern most tip of the peninsula of Jutland lays the most sparsely populated area of the whole country. The entire area consisted primarily of small villages and farms, most of which belonged to large estates owned by the upper class and nobility. The lives of these villagers had changed very little for centuries; their births, marriages, and deaths being duly recorded by the parish priest. It is one such entry in the parish register of Vrejlev in Hjørring County that is of greatest interest to our family. For the year 1849 on page 79, the second entry reads:

Mouritz Larsen, born the 28th January and christened the 25 February 1849, the son of Tileburner of Ronnousholm's tile-works Lars Mouritzen and Maren Sorensdatter. Witnesses were Katrine Jensdatter from Guldager, Miss Else Margrethe Andersdatter from Gunderup, tenant farmer Lars Nielsen from Guldagerholm, single man Jens Christophersen from Ronnousholm, single man Hans Christian Andersen from Gunderup. The mother was introduced the 25th Mar.¹

From this entry we learn that Mourits was born at Ronnousholm where his father was employed as a brickmaker. Ronnousholm was not actually a village but a group of company houses located at the brickyard. The Mouritsen family lived in one of these houses. The nearest village was Guldager a little over a mile down the road. Another mile and a half farther south was the village of Vrejlev where the parish church was located. This explains why Mourits would have reported Guldager as his birthplace since it represented the nearest town to his actual place of birth.

We also learn that Mourits was christened

Larsen, not Mouritsen. This requires a word of explanation about the origin of the family name. In the rural areas of Denmark and among the common folk it was customary to give children a surname that identified their father; hence, the son of a man named Lars would be named Larsen and a daughter would be named Larsdatter. Each generation would use a different surname than their parents. In a similar fashion Lars received the name Mouritsen at his christening denoting that he was the son of Mourits. Lars's father appeared in most records as Moust or Maust; both names are considered nicknames for Mourits. Thus, our Mourits was named after his grandfather, Moust or Mourits Andersen. It was the subsequent immigration to America that kept us all from being Larsens. Upon entry to this country all of the children were recorded as Mouritsens, their father's name, since that is the custom in English-speaking countries. Mourits was an uncommon given name for Danish males so Mouritsen is not a common Danish surname.

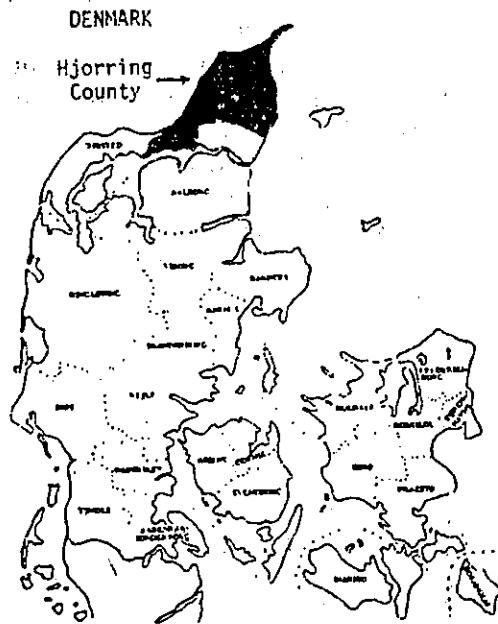
We can also surmise that Mourits was a healthy baby as it was nearly a month before his parents presented him at the parish church for christening. Usually if the baby's health was in doubt, the priest was summoned to the home for the christening.

Mourits was the first child born to his parents, but he had an older half-sister Johanne Marie (Mariah) who was about two and one-half years old at the time of his birth. She was born out-of-wedlock to Mourits' mother, but she was raised as part of the Mouritsen family. Later three more sisters joined the family — Maren (Mary), Martine (Martha), and Johanne Kirstine (Jane).

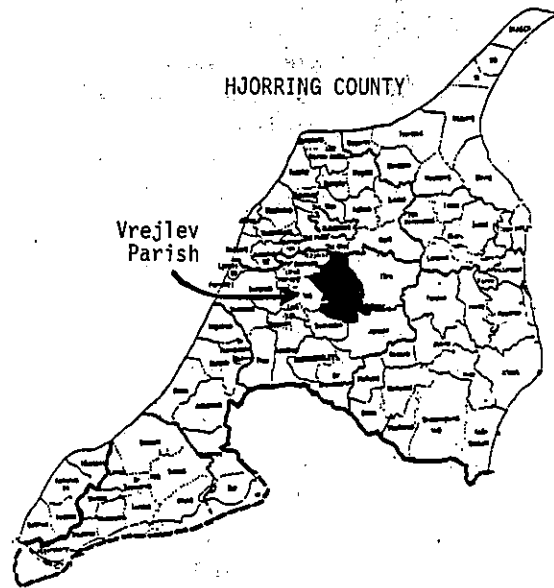
During the summer of 1854 Lars had an opportunity to better his position by moving from Ronnousholm down to the Guldager brickyard, which he leased and managed for five years.² The 1855 census for Guldager indicates that Lars was now thirty, his wife thirty-two, with five children as follows: Johanne Marie Mortensdatter, age nine; Mouritz Larsen, age seven; Maren Larsdatter, age five; Martine Larsdatter, age four; and Johanne Christine [sic], age three.³ It was here at Guldager that Lars built his family a fine brick home. His grandson Victor records visiting the family home at Guldager on Saturday, August 20, 1910:

Today has been a highlight in my life. I've

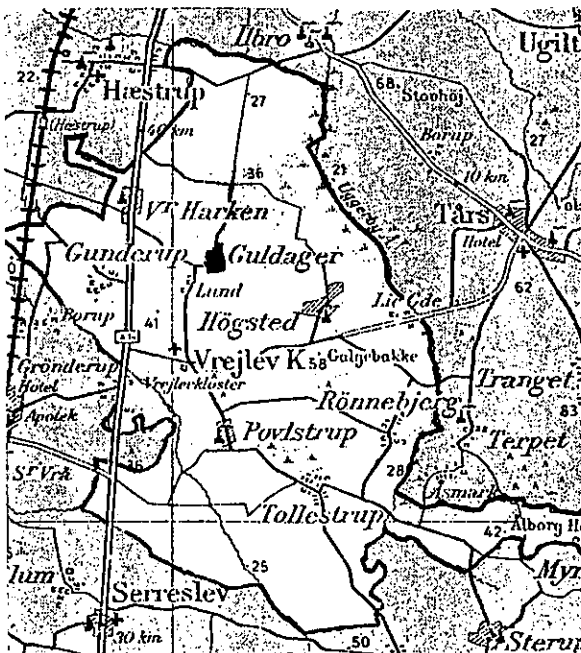
DENMARK — NATIVE LAND OF THE MOURITSSENS'



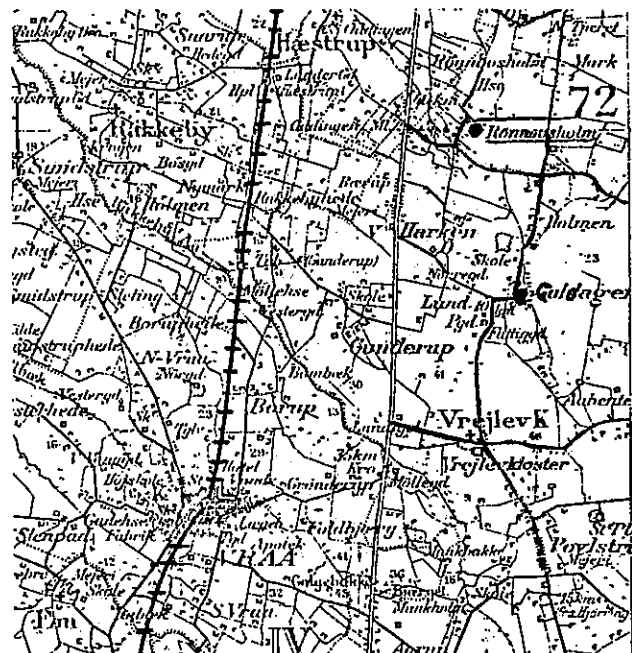
Denmark, showing location of Hjørring County



Hjørring County, showing location of Vrejlev Parish



Vrejlev Parish, showing location of villages and parish church.



Detailed map showing location of Ronnesholm, birthplace of Mourits Mouritsen



Victor Mouritsen as a missionary in front of the Lars Mouritsen home at Guldager

been to the little town of Guldager (translated gold field; personally I see nothing about the place to merit such a name, but there is perhaps some legend back farther that I haven't heard about) where my father was born [sic]. I inquired at this little place if anyone remembered Lars Mouritsen (my grandfather who used to have a brickyard there.) No one seemed to remember him. Finally one old fellow spoke up from the back of the group and said to the rest, 'Mon det kunde vere' Lars Teglbrender?' (I wonder if that could be Lars Brickmaker?) 'Was your grandfather a brickmaker?' I said he was. He said, 'Ja, him kan vi godt husker.' (We can well remember him.) I was treated very nicely by the people in the neighborhood and naturally they had a lot of questions to ask me about 'Lars Teglbrender' and his family. They showed me the house where my father was born, and the old holes from which Grandpa had taken clay to make his brick. I tried to picture my father as a little boy running around there at the age of eight or nine, wearing wooden shoes, which it's quite certain that he wore. The old home is quite well preserved and has been added onto since Pa was born there [sic].⁴

Although this was not the house in which Mourits was born, it is doubtless the one he would remember from his childhood.

Little else is known of Mourits's childhood years until he was eight years old. The events that transpired in 1857 and 1858 were ultimately responsible for our family saga—a story that would have otherwise been relatively uneventful. The same year that Mourits was born (1849) the Danish parliament passed the "Grundlov," a new set of laws that established religious liberty in Denmark. One of the immediate outcomes of the new law was the influx of foreign missionaries, anxious to gain converts in this traditionally Lutheran country. In June of 1850 three Mormon missionaries arrived in Denmark to introduce the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to the Scandinavian countries. "Notwithstanding the religious liberty, the elders were subjected to mobbings and considerable persecution in the beginning, but gradually these persecutions became less severe, and the elders extended their labors to nearly every nook and corner in Denmark."⁵ By 1852 the northern part of Jutland was organized by the Mormon elders as the Vendsyssel conference of the Danish Mission. Though this area was poor and no doubt despised by the more cosmopolitan Danes, it has been said that "no province in America or Europe has, in comparison to area and number of inhabitants, yielded so much good material to the Mormon church as has the little province of Vendsyssel."⁶ It was inevitable that these missionaries would eventually touch the lives of the Mouritsen family.

In 1854 Hans Christian Sorensen, later called Hegsted, who was the younger brother of Maren, came to live with the Mouritsen family, which he continued to do each summer and some of the winters. In this association was set the stage for what was to follow. I will now excerpt from the account of Hans Hegsted, who was living in the Mouritsen home at this time:

In the autumn of 1857 a new life opened for me, filled with blessedness. There was talk of a strange doctrine in the land which, in the common opinion, was heresy. This brought me to pondering and an earnest considering of the meaning of life, both the present and the future life.

In all the sincerity of my heart, for the first time I kneeled in the dust for God, with the pure promise in my heart that I would serve Him all the days of my life with all my strength. . . . I searched the scriptures with a

watchful mind and awakened feeling for the path disclosed by Jesus and His apostles to the ancient Jews. . . . And in my seeking and continual prayer to God, He did not slight me; before this dawned on me, one of His servants was in my home.

While it was still unknown to me who he was or what sort of a message he came with, he told me he was a Latter-day Saint of the Church of Jesus Christ, that he lived in Søndre Vraae, his name was Niels Jensen Simonson, and he had tracts to sell.

He was with us for about an hour, and I can verily say that all his testimony and every word that left his mouth was a torch of truth like the source of light itself. And his speech, though mild, impelled with such power upon me and became so imprinted upon my mind that I've never forgotten what he told me. And, as praise to the Lord who created me, I can say that on his day was a seed planted in fertile soil.

I bought tracts from this Niels Jensen. . . . and through reading them I was filled with the conviction that his doctrine was sent from heaven, a revelation from Jesus Christ to this generation. Thus, I came to visit the meetings of the Latter-day Saints in Kragvad, Taars, and in the home of Søren Chr. Thura in Sønder Harritslev. Through listening to their testimonies and seeing how virtuous and loving they were with each other, I rejoiced in my heart for having found the Kingdom of God.⁷

Family tradition tells of Lars and Hans attending a meeting, probably in Taars, with the intent of tormenting the elders and breaking up the meeting.⁸ Perhaps they did attend such a meeting and perhaps neither was willing yet to speak the thoughts of their heart regarding the message of the missionaries, so they attended the meeting under the pretense of being hecklers; in this way they could hear the missionaries again without appearing to be interested. At any rate, the family story relates that after the meeting was closed, the erstwhile detractors invited the elders to the Mouritsen home, as they were both anxious for Maren to hear more of the message. Hans Hegsted continues his story:

Having decided to be baptized, it took place February 8, 1858, performed by Presi-

dent P.A. Fjelsted of the Vendsyssel conference.

Friends and acquaintances around about me were quite indignant and wroth to see my course of action not only condemn utterly their systems of religion, but themselves, too, in their gratification of their sensual lusts.

A few days after my entering the congregation of the Lord, my sister Maren and her husband Lauritz Mouritsen received the gospel, and we were soon joined in faith and prayers.

The following summer (1858), together with many more of the brethren, we worked in the Guldager Brickyard, and we were as of one mind and one heart. All were Latter-day Saints. That summer passed with great joy and blessing; yea, like a cloud gliding under the blue vault of heaven, and we lived as in a paradise. Many from the surrounding country came and received the Gospel.⁹

Lars and Maren Mouritsen were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on February 17, 1858, a Wednesday. It was necessary to cut a hole in the thick layer of ice over the claypit at the brickyard. The ordinance was performed by Elder Niels Peter Larsen.¹⁰ Whether this is the same Niels Peter Larsen who served as a witness at the christening of their daughter Johanne (Jane) is not known, but it is a possibility that he was a friend of the family and may have been instrumental in teaching them the Gospel.

It is probable that Mourits was also baptized at about the same time as his parents. His older sister Mariah records that she was baptized in March of that same year by the same elder that had baptized her parents. At any rate, Mourits later reported (at the time of his endowment) that he, too, was baptized in 1858.¹¹

Family tradition says that as a result of his baptism Lars was fired. What we do know is that Lars had a five-year lease on the brickyard as its manager. It is not clear if that lease expired in 1858 or in 1859. Hans Hegsted indicates that the lease ran until November 1, 1859.¹² His story also indicates that there was a happy association at the brickyard through the summer of 1858. In either case it is likely that the owner was pressured or stirred to anger in his own heart against Lars. He probably felt that Lars was using the brickyard as a base of operations for the Mormons and felt un-

easy about the reports that must have been provided regularly by the organized opposition to the spread of the Gospel. Either the owner probably refused to renew a lease on the brickyard (assuming it expired in 1858) or he terminated the original lease agreement earlier than its November 1859 expiration date. Lars now found it necessary to relocate his family. From the journal of Hans Hegsted we learn that Lars and Maren relocated at Hvidste in the Parish of Taars.¹³

Lars must have taken the time to visit his own family, brothers, sisters, and cousins, down in Farstrup Parish. Family tradition and entries in the journal of his grandson Victor Mouritsen indicate that his family was also displeased with his decision to abandon the faith of his birth and become a Mormon. Though there is no indication of any trouble, it appears that henceforth his family kept their brother at arm's length. This was not the case in Maren's family. In addition to Hans Hegsted and Maren, their baby sister Birthe and their mother became members of the Church in Denmark. Birthe and her husband Niels Christensen were later to come to America, as well as Hans Hegsted and his family.¹⁴

Meanwhile, in Utah, local affairs were normalizing following the threat of invasion by Johnston's Army. The edict against emigration of European Saints to Utah was recalled, and instructions went out for the resumption of the "gathering of Israel."¹⁵

On January 1, 1859 the *Millennial Star*, official church publication in Europe, announced:

We are pleased to be able at length to say to the Saints that emigration is again opened for all those who have means at their command to gather to Zion. As we have before said, no one will receive any help whatever from the P. E. Fund (Perpetual Emigration). The deliverance of the Saints depends entirely upon themselves, and we hope that those who have the means will go, and that those who can assist their brethren will stretch forth a helping hand. There will be an opportunity for all to go with handcarts this season, as usual, who cannot raise the amount necessary to procure a team. Those who have the means, and prefer it, can go through to the valley, but those who feel desirous to go to the United States and assist

in strengthening the settlements on the route, will have an opportunity after the through emigration shall have closed.¹⁶

With this turn of events the Mouritsen family made arrangements to come to Utah. Perhaps the persecution and harassment they were experiencing in Denmark lessened the pangs of sadness and worry as they left their native land; but it would be unfeeling not to recognize the quality of the sacrifice they were ready to make. It was a sacrifice for us, one that would afford circumstances and opportunities from which we could not have otherwise benefited.

The L.D.S. branch records from the Vendsyssel District of the Danish Mission note that:

#146 Lars Mouritzen, Farstrup, from Taars Parish and #147 Mouritz Mouritzen from Taars Parish emigrated 1 April 1859. (The pages for the females for this period are missing.)¹⁷

The Mouritsens would have to travel to Copenhagen to meet other Scandinavian emigrants. From here they would travel by boat to the south coast of England, then overland by rail to Liverpool from whence they would begin the ocean voyage to America.

The Scandinavian Mission Emigration records make the following entry:

Spring 1859 — *William Tapscott*, over the Atlantic, Vendsyssel Conference

Lars Mouritzen born Jylland (Jutland) age 34 Tileburner

Maren Mouritzen born Jylland age 35 Wife

Johanne Marie age 13

Mouritz [sic] age 10

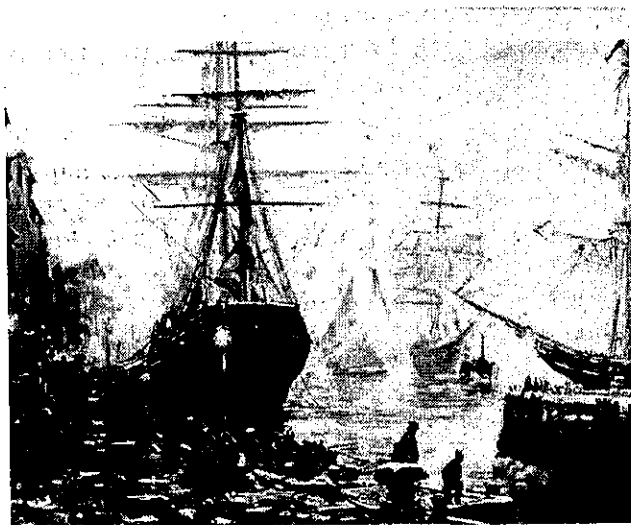
Maren age 9

Martine age 8

Johanne Kristine [sic] age 6 Their children

They are to go by ox and wagon. Money paid was 1500 Danish crowns. Passage was 360, cattle 504, Exchange 609. Foreign Coins * = L (pound) — 3; s — 317½, or a total of 1500.¹⁸

Again the Liverpool (England) shipping lists of the British Mission record the family on April 11, 1859 aboard the ship *William Tapscott*, 1750 tons, bound for New York. Mr. Bell was the ship's master; Asa Calkins (President of the Mission)



"Embarkation of the Saints at Liverpool by Ken Baxter. Copyright owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Used by permission. The William Tapscott would have looked much like these sailing ships.

was the agent. The destination of our family was listed as "through," as compared to "ordinary" and "handcart." They had ticket #104.¹⁹ We know they occupied the part of the ship in the upper, between decks.²⁰

Practically the entire passenger list of the *William Tapscott* consisted of Mormon emigrants. Considering the hassle that most of them must have experienced in bringing themselves and all their worldly possessions to this port at Liverpool, it is little wonder that songs of joy resounded from all parts of the ship as it left the dock.²¹

It is interesting to consider for a moment the setting in which all of these events were taking place. What was the state of national and world affairs in 1859? If Lars and his family had been able to read one of the New York papers as they came ashore at Castle Gardens (later called Ellis Island) in New York harbor, they would have found that most of the major articles dealt with four issues:

first — the Austro-Italian War was expanding with the landing of the French Army at Sardinia. There was talk of a larger war developing which would involve all of Europe.²²

second — the slavery question was reported in various lectures, anti-slavery societies, public meetings, etc.

third — the progress of women's rights occu-

ried considerable space, including the activities of Susan B. Anthony.

fourth — the "Utah War" and the Mormon issue were discussed in lengthy articles denouncing the Buchanan administration's failure to deal effectively with the "open insolence of the Mormon authorities."²³

The Times also reported the arrival that day of nearly four thousand emigrants, arriving in eight ships from Liverpool, Havre, and Bremen.²⁴ Tucked away on page four of the paper was the following:

The packet-ship *William Tapscott*, Captain Bell, arrived yesterday in thirty-one days from Liverpool bringing seven hundred twenty-six Mormon emigrants, including women and children. Half of them are from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and the other half are from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. They are a better class than the average European emigrants. With the exception of some seventy-five, who remain in the East, the whole party leaves for Florence in the Nebraska Territory this evening via the Suspension Bridge route.²⁵

The New York Herald gave an even more detailed and colorful report of the arrival of our ancestors which is worth quoting:

Last evening about five hundred of the Mormon emigrants that arrived in the city on Friday from Europe left for the West by the Albany Steamer, *Isaac Newton*.

The Mormon agents stationed here, having received positive instructions from President Brigham Young to send all emigrants in the future early in the season in order to avoid the sad calamities of being caught in early winter on the plains as in 1856, used every dispatch, and in thirty hours from landing in Castle Garden had them again in motion up the Hudson.

In emigration business, the Mormons are considerably ahead of the Gentiles. The Chief conceives his plans, makes all contracts, gets the whole machinery in motion, and superintends everything and everybody. Without employees to assist he calls in action the willing hands of the emigrants themselves and teaches them that they are the

most interested in what has to be done, and holds forth the virtue of useful labor. Carrying out matters in this style, the five hundred did all their luggage business at Castle Garden, got to the depot of the Michigan Central Railroad with all their children, loose baggage, coffee pots, kettles, and pans, and were ready at the appointed hour to bid goodbye to Gotham and gave three parting cheers to anxious friends, who had held on to the last moment in the warm grasp of friendship and paternity.

The Mormons seem to have a very decided objection to have unbelievers mingle with their crowd. Some other emigrants for Albany got into the same part of the steamer where they were quartered, which led to a remonstrance on the part of the chief elders and subsequently to the entire clearance of the steamer; after which the faithful entered at the call of their names, and the outsiders were quartered in another part of the vessel. This separating of the sheep from the goats detained the *Isaac Newton* full an hour after her usual time of sailing.

The company had a very large amount of baggage for people of their class. In addition to their usual amount of free baggage with each ticket, they had nearly six-thousand pounds extra. Altogether they had upwards of fifty-thousand pounds. Considering the expense of transportation in Europe before they reached Liverpool, and the charges going west, close upon twenty cents a pound, it is presumed that the Saints had held on to the valuables and heirlooms from father to son, etc., to enrich the valleys of the mountains.

By this arrival New York and adjacent cities have had an addition to the Mormon population of something like two-hundred souls. Over those remaining, the same care and supervision were exercised as over the emigrants going West. The chief elder in Williamsburg (Brooklyn) was "as busy as a bee" all day yesterday, and before sundown he had them all rejoicing on the bare boards in the land of the free.

Some idea of their interest to go west may be drawn from the fact that not a person tarried behind who had the means to continue the journey to the frontier, and several

of those now enroute were entirely destitute of the means sufficient to get bread by the way and had to start depending on the Lord and their brethren.

Several, before the starting, were encouraged to exercise faith and a way would be opened up by which they could arrive at their destination. With all their peculiarities, the exhibition of such earnestness of purpose and determination to carry out faith, in spite of innumerable and disheartening difficulties as those that lay before them, the Utah emigrant commands respect. The end of "Mormonism" is not yet.²⁶

No, rather than an end in sight, consider how many beginnings were represented by only our own Mouritsen family who stood there on the New York dock that day. When one enumerates the family of Mourits (as represented by this book), then multiplies that by four sisters and their posterity, the words of the newspaper reporter become prophetic.

The Church report on this immigration appeared in the *Millennial Star*, the official Church publication, as follows:

One Hundred and Fourth Company — *William Tapscott*, 725 souls. On Monday, April 11, 1859, the ship *William Tapscott* sailed from Liverpool, England, with 725 British, Scandinavian, and Swiss Saints on board. The Scandinavian portion of the company, consisting of 355 souls, had sailed from Copenhagen, Denmark on the steamer, *L. N. Hvedt*, April 1st, 1859 in charge of Elders Carl Widerborg and Niels Wilhelmsen, and reached Grimsby, England on the 6th, after a rather long and stormy passage over the German Ocean. From Grimsby the emigrants continued by rail to Liverpool, where they, on the 7th, went on board the *William Tapscott*, and were joined by the British and Swiss emigrants. Elder Robert F. Neslen was appointed president of the company with Henry H. Harris and George Rowley as counselors.

After going through the process of government inspection, clearing, etc., President Neslen, in connection with his counselors, proceeded to organize the company into ten wards, namely, five English and five Scandinavian, appointing a president over each,



Inkwash drawing of Mormons on a crowded emigrant ship. Artist unknown. Copyright owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Used by permission. Note the quality of dress and orderliness which were typical of Mormon companies crossing the ocean.

to see to the faithful observance of cleanliness, good order, etc. The Scandinavian Saints occupied one side of the vessel, and the British and Swiss the other. The company was blessed with a most pleasant and agreeable voyage, which lasted only thirty-one days. The health of the passengers was exceptionally good, which was demonstrated by the fact that only one death occurred on board, and that was an old Swedish sister by the name of Inger Olsen Hegg, sixty-one years old, who had been afflicted for upwards of five years previous to her embarkation. This was counterbalanced by two births. In the matrimonial department the company did exceedingly well, as no less than nineteen marriages were solemnized on board; of these five couples were English, one Swiss, and thirteen Scandinavians. Every day during the voyage the people were called together for prayer every morning and evening at eight o'clock. On Sundays three meetings were held on deck, and fellowship meetings in each ward two nights a week. The monotony of the voyage was also enlivened with singing, instrumental music, dancing, games, etc., in which, as a matter of course, the junior portion took a prominent part, while the more sedate enjoyed themselves in

seeing and hearing the happifying recreations. Elder Neslen writes that he felt it quite a task when he was appointed to take charge of a company composed of people from so many countries, speaking nine different languages, and having different manners, customs, and peculiarities, and thrown together under such close circumstances; but through the faithfulness and diligence of the Saints, which was universally manifested, he soon found the load far easier than he had anticipated, and on the arrival of the company in New York, it was pronounced by doctors and government officers to be the best disciplined and most agreeable company that ever arrived at that port.

Arriving safely in the New York harbor, the emigrants were landed in the Castle Gardens on Saturday, the 14th of May. On the same day, in the evening, most of them continued the journey by steamboat up the Hudson River to Albany, where they arrived the following morning. Thence they traveled by rail via Niagara to Windsor, in Canada, where they, on the 16th, crossed the river Detroit, and thence continued the journey by rail, by way of Quincy to St. Joseph, Missouri, where they arrived on the 21st. In the afternoon of that day they boarded the steamboat *St. Mary* which brought them to Florence, Nebraska, where they arrived on the 25th, in the morning. The whole route through the States was one which no former company of emigrating Saints had ever taken. Brother George Q. Cannon and those who assisted him in the emigrating business were quite successful in making arrangements for their transportation by rail direct to St. Joseph, instead of, as first contemplated, shipping them to Iowa City.

On their arrival at Florence the Saints were organized into temporary districts and branches, with presiding officers over each, whose duty it was to look after the comfort and welfare of the people while encamped at that place. Prayer meetings were held regularly twice a week in most of these temporary branches. About fifty of the Saints who crossed the Atlantic in the *William Tapscott* stopped temporarily in New York and other parts of the United States.²⁷



Winter Quarters Scene — Panorama #21 by C.C.A. Christensen. BYU Collection, used by permission. This scene looks north across the pioneer outfitting station later known as Florence, Nebraska on the west shore of the Missouri River.

We can only imagine what Florence, Nebraska must have looked like to these European emigrants. People of every land, speaking different languages, all seeking a momentary stopping place before jumping off into the vast American frontier. During their first night at Florence the Mouritsen family, along with others of their party, were being lodged in an old, long-house in a dark alleyway. The roof of the house was covered with some sort of paper which rattled continuously. During the night a terrible storm camp up, with rain, thunder, and lightning. It seemed to them that the whole house was on fire. They were so frightened they couldn't find the door, so [Lars] broke the window and they got out of the house that way, only to find there was no fire at all, just a severe storm. This experience cost [Lars] \$12.00 to replace the broken glass.²⁸

There were five organized companies that were outfitted at Florence in 1859, bringing a total of 1431 emigrants to Utah. It is clear that all of these companies included passengers from the *William Tapscott*. The longest any of them camped in Florence was a month, for on June 9th the first company, the George Rowley Handcart Company, departed and by June 26th the last two companies were underway. On that day both the Robert F. Neslen and the Edward Stevenson companies headed west with fifty-six wagons (380

people) and fifty-four wagons (285 people) respectively.²⁹

A review of the rosters of these companies as they arrived in Salt Lake indicates the Mouritsens were part of the Rowley Handcart Company.³⁰ However we know that Lars had a team and wagon and there were eight wagons in this handcart company. Some of these wagons were left behind at Devil's Gate to regroup and join subsequent wagon trains because they were not able to keep up with the handcarts.³¹ Whether our family was among this group we do not know. However, for some reason the family is also listed as belonging to the Robert F. Neslen company;³² there is no known explanation for this discrepancy.

Because the wagon trains traveled in such close proximity of one another, the adventures and stories recorded by anyone on the trail that summer were no doubt experienced by our family also. For that reason I will recount some of these experiences, as they give a flavor for the crossing of the Plains as experienced by the Mouritsen family. The best account is the record kept by James Stephen Brown, from which we quote:

[In June] 1859 the company set out for Salt Lake City, Utah. There were nine different nationalities of people represented, namely: English, Irish, Scotch, Welsh, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelanders; we also had some Americans from the Eastern, Middle, and Southern States, all mixed together. Many of them had never driven an ox one mile in their lives, and the result was almost like herding a train on the plains. If it had not been for several excellent ox teamsters, besides some five or six others that were quite handy, we would doubtless have had most destructive stampedes. As it was, the company did not have any serious mishaps. In a few days the train became regulated, and we had more system and order in travel. For the first five or six days of the journey the stock seemed in danger of being destroyed by flies and mosquitoes, and the people suffered much from the same cause.

We met with a company of Sioux Indians on the 24th. These formed a line of battle across the road ahead of the company, and sent two men to meet us. I was traveling in advance of the company, and although I had



The Saints Crossing the Nebraska Plains — Panorama #22 by C.C.A. Christensen. BYU Collection, used by permission. You will note here that the pioneer companies traveled in close proximity to one another.

never been among the Sioux Indians in my life for an hour, nor had I ever been where I had an opportunity to study their language, I had not the slightest difficulty in talking to them, or they to me. Consequently, I learned at once that these Indians were on the war-path, and were hunting the Omahas and Poncas. They were hungry and said they must have food from the company; so they were told to form a line parallel with the road, and to keep one-fourth of a mile back, so as not to stampede the trail or frighten the women and children. They were allowed to send two men on foot to spread blankets where the company could put such food as we had to spare.

Meanwhile, I gave orders to the sergeant of the guard, G. L. Farrell (who later became the bishop of the Smithfield Ward), and the several captains to draw up in close order, have every teamster in his place, and all the women and children in the wagons, and for each man to have his gun where he could lay his hand on it without a moment's delay. Each family was to place some food on the blankets by the roadside. Not one team was to stop without orders. The wagons were to be corralled as quickly as possible, if they must be, at the first signal from the captain to

do so; for the Indians appeared very warlike in their paint and feathers.

When the red men learned that it was a company of Mormons they had met, they readily complied with the captain's terms, and a number rode up and shook hands. As the company passed their lines of not more than one hundred and fifty warriors, there came fourteen buffalo in sight, quite close, and attention was turned to them so much that the Indians took what the company had placed on their blankets, and we passed on without further interruption.

One evening the company camped on a tributary of the Platte River. Just as the cattle were being unyoked the Sioux Indians flocked into camp, all well-armed warriors. I saw that it was quite possible that they meant mischief, as there were no Indian families in sight; so I called to the company to continue their camp duties as if nothing unusual had happened, but for every man to see to his firearms quietly and be ready to use them if an emergency should arise. Then I turned to the chief, and it being again given to me to talk and understand the Indians, I asked what their visit meant; if it was peace that they go with me to the middle of the corral of wagons and smoke the pipe of peace and have a friendly talk, as myself and people were Mormons and friends to the Indians, and that I wished them to be good friends to me and my people.

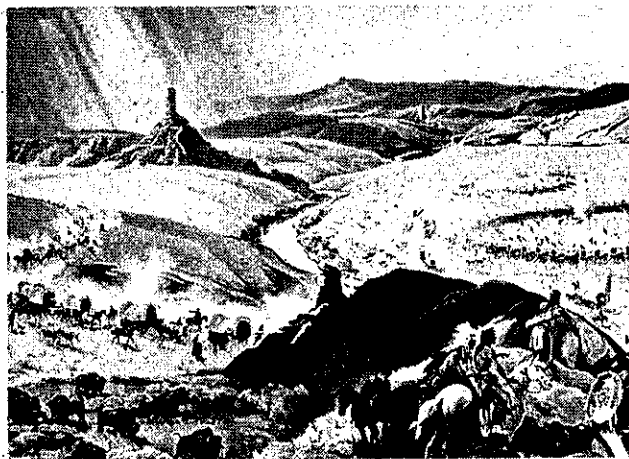
The chief readily responded, and called his peace council of smokers to the center of the corral, where they seated themselves in a circle. I took a seat to the right hand of the chief, and then the smoking and talking commenced. The chief assured me that their visit was a friendly one, and to trade with the emigrants. I inquired of him why, if their visit meant peace, they all came so well armed. He answered that his people had just pitched camp a short distance back in the hills, and not knowing who we were had come down before laying down their arms.

By this time it seemed that there were about three Indians to one white person in the camp. I told the chief that it was getting too late to trade; my people were all busy in camp duties, and I was going to send our stock to where there was good feed for them.

It was my custom, I said, to send armed men to watch over them, and the guards always had orders to shoot any wild beast that might disturb them, and if anybody were to come among the stock in the night we thought them to be thieves and our enemies. If they attempted to drive off our stock the guards had order to shoot, and our camp guards also were ordered to shoot any thief that might come prowling around camp at night. I said that, as we did not desire to do the Indians any harm, we wished the chief and his men to go to their camp, as it was now too late to trade, but in the morning, when the sun shone on our tents and wagon covers, not when it shone on the mountain tops in the west, they could leave their arms behind and come down with their robes, pelts, and furs, and we would trade with them as friends; but he was not to allow any of his men to visit our camp or stock at night. The chief said that was heap good talk, and ordered his people to return to their own camp. They promptly obeyed, to the great relief of the company, which had been very nervous, as scarcely one of them except myself had ever witnessed such a sight before.

Next morning, between daylight and sunrise, the Indians appeared on the brow of the hill northeast of camp. There seemed to be hundreds of them formed in a long line and making a very formidable array. Just as the sunlight shone on the tents and wagon covers they made a descent on us that sent a thrill through every heart in camp, until it was seen that they had left their weapons of war behind, and had brought only articles of trade. They came into the center of the corral, the people gathered with what they had to trade, and for a while great bargaining was carried on. For once I had more than I could do in assisting them to understand each other, and see that there was no disturbance or wrong done in the great zeal of both parties.

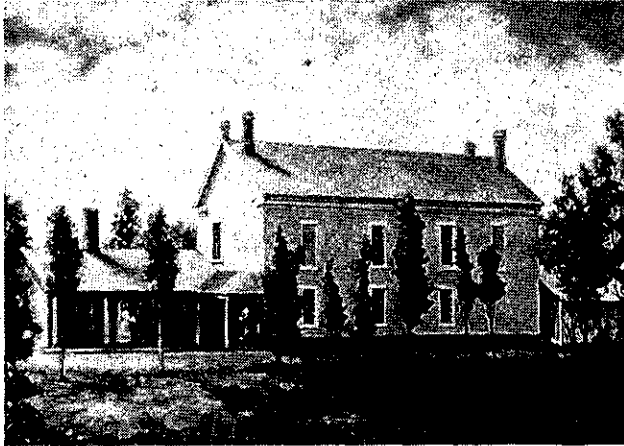
The trading was over without any trouble, and there was a hearty shaking of hands, and the company resumed its journey up the river, passing and being repassed by numerous companies moving west to Pike's Peak and to Utah, California, or Oregon. There were gold seekers, freighters, and a host of fami-



Crossing the Plains at Chimney Rock. Copyright owned by the Cody Ward Mural Trust; Glenn E. Nielson, trustee. You will note here two common features of the trek across the plains — dust and Indians.

lies of emigrants and as the company advanced to the west we met many people going to the east. They were traveling all ways, with ox, horse, and mule teams, as well as by pack trains of horses and mules; while some were floating down the Platte River in small rowboats.³³

During the evenings plans for the following day were made and prayers were said. Sometimes there was singing and dancing. Always a guard was posted to warn the camp of Indians and wild animals. On the evening of July 9th they saw a band of Indians marching past the camp. Their faces were painted black and red to signify they were on the warpath. Above their heads on long slim poles were tied many human scalps, illustrating the day's hideous activities. In front of them they drove an Indian woman and two young Indian boys who must have known their doom for they looked so helpless and frightened. The camp watched anxiously till they had passed out of sight. Early the next morning Mr. Harris and one of the men went back about a mile to find an oxen which had been left to rest because it was sore-footed. On their way they passed a grove of trees, and there they found the bodies of the woman and the boys.



Endowment House by Cornelius Salisbury. Copyright owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Used by permission. It was here that Mourits' first marriage took place.

and his sister Mary (Maren), who had married Anton C. Jensen the previous year, received their endowments in the Endowment House.⁴⁹

Nearly four years later, on May 3, 1870, Mourits returned to the Endowment House in Salt Lake City; this time to be married and sealed to Mary Elizabeth Hillyard. This, too, was a family affair because Mourits's sister Jane (Johanne Kirstine) was married on the same day to Edwin Ruthven Miles.⁵⁰ Nothing is recorded of the courtship of Mourits and Mary Elizabeth. She was the oldest daughter of Thomas Hillyard and Mary Ann Heaps, having been born at Salt Lake City on September 28, 1855. Her childhood and youth were spent in Smithfield. She was no doubt a very mature young woman to be willing and capable to assume the responsibilities of wife and homemaker a little less than five months before her fifteenth birthday. The marriage and sealing were performed by Joseph F. Smith, who later became the Prophet.

Mourits and Mary returned to Smithfield where they purchased the corner lot on Main and Depot Streets (First North) in Smithfield. They built a one-room log house where their five children were born — Mourits in 1871, Mary Elizabeth on July 6, 1872, John in 1874, Eliza Jane on March 7, 1876, and Loretta in 1879. Both of the boys lived only long enough to be named. The baby Retta, as she was called, lived only about a year.

In the spring of 1879 the log house was moved to the rear and a beautiful brick home was built. By that fall they were able to move into the kitchen and bedroom; during the summer of 1880 they finished the living room and bedroom downstairs. They left the upstairs in one large room, which was later used as a dance hall. Except for the death of their three babies they were happy in their home. Mourits prospered and his business ventures usually did well.

Then Mary Elizabeth's health began to deteriorate; she suffered increasingly from rheumatism. In the winter of 1880-1881 she became ill and soon died on January 5, 1881 at the age of twenty-six, leaving Mourits and two little girls, Mary (age eight) and Eliza (age four) to mourn her loss.

For the next four years Mourits lived at his home alone, taking his meals at his in-laws (the Hillyards) where his two girls lived. Mourits continued to work and prosper; he purchased other property in Smithfield including a lot two blocks north of his home on Main Street, an interest in the brick and lime business three blocks west of his home, a good farm in the Northfield, and another one hundred sixty acres two and one-half miles up Smithfield Canyon, where he built a two-room log house.

Mourits had become the leader of an orchestra



Mourits Mouritsen, believed to have been taken sometime after his first marriage and prior to his mission

For many there were friends or relatives already settled in the area who came for a tearful reunion with the arriving emigrants. The cattle and livestock were tagged or marked and herded into the tithing yard temporarily. Brigham Young or other leading authorities of the Church greeted the pioneers and spoke to them. They advised the new settlers where to go and what to do to support themselves for the winter.⁴¹ Only when all of the members of this company had been provided for and arrangements made did the captain dismiss the company. Then came the farewells, for many who had truly become friends after sharing ocean voyages, steamboat and train rides, and the trek across the Plains together.

The Mouritsens must have known other Danish settlers from their own area in Denmark, because they went immediately to Sessions Settlement (now Bountiful) to stay. They had one cow that was too lame to travel further, which they left in the care of a man along the way. Later, after they were settled, Maren and Mourits walked back to Salt Lake City to get their cow, only to learn that it had been sold.⁴²

Lars constructed a dugout in which they lived for the first two winters in Utah. Most of the pioneer dugouts were located around the 5th South and 200 West to 400 North area in Bountiful. This was the original fort, but by 1859 many families were settling all along the road leading north (presently called the "Mountain Road" or Highway 89) towards Kaysville. We know our family lived somewhere between Kaysville and Bountiful. Lars bought some land and raised wheat and corn.⁴³

In 1861 the family moved to Plain City, northwest of Ogden, near the Great Salt Lake, where they resided until 1865. Here Lars made adobe and built a house. While at Plain City they sold the oxen and bought a team of horses. Mourits, who was twelve by now, had learned to play the violin sufficiently well to play for public dances. He was also employed herding sheep out on the Promontory along the Weber River; his earnings were used to support the family budget. From his youth he developed habits of hard work and industry; he was self-supporting at an early age.

In the spring of 1865 a Dr. Williams offered to exchange property in Smithfield for Lars's place in Plain City. Apparently this included a sod-roofed log house at 100 North and 100 East in Smithfield and forty acres of land exchanged for

forty bushels of wheat.⁴⁴ The new home was located on a creek of pure water. Lars and his brother-in-law Niels Christensen located some good adobe clay a few miles southwest of Smithfield. They made adobe bricks and built a house just north of the existing log home. Subsequently they made brick and built a brick home joining on the east. This was Mourits's home until he married.⁴⁵

Lars bought and operated a ferry across the Bear River northwest of Smithfield near the Joseph Smith farm. Mourits operated this ferry for sometime.⁴⁶ Not much else is known of Mourits's teen years. He must have been employed in many different types of work as he acquired skills in farming, gardening, brick-making, and carpentry. He learned the trade of his father and worked along with Lars in the lime kiln business. After all the farm work was done for the summer and all the brick and lime made that they could sell, Mourits would go to the canyon and cut and pile logs. In the late winter he, with other men, would make roads and haul the logs which were used to burn brick and lime and also for firewood. There were no overshoes in those days so he would wrap his feet and legs with sacks; at night they were so frozen that the sacks had to be cut away from his legs.⁴⁷

In his *History of Smithfield Canyon* Lawrence Cantwell discusses the use made of the canyon by our ancestor as follows:

[In Smithfield Canyon] north of the scout cabin and up the mountainside to the summit is a pile of mountain mahogany cut in the early days of the pioneers. The axe marks still show on the butts. The stumps are still standing like it was only yesterday when man cut off the trees. We can only conjecture the man who worked here on this spot of steep hillside over a hundred years ago. He was powerful and clever with his axe for the strokes are few and clear. Could it have been E. R. "Rue" Miles, Robert Thornley, or perhaps Mourits Mouritsen? Now we shall never know, but it is there in mute testimony of man's early search for fuel and survival.⁴⁸

In November of 1866 the Mouritsen family must have all traveled to Salt Lake City, for on November 24 Martha (Martine) was endowed and sealed to Horatio Merrill. Four days later, on the 28th of November, Mourits (age seventeen)

The roads were dusty and the days hot and dry, making the journey an exhausting one. At night the pioneers were always ready to stop when the captain called halt. At camping time the wagons and handcarts were placed in a circle forming a corral for the animals. Wood and sticks were gathered and a large community fire built outside the circle. The majority of their suppers consisted of fried pancakes and bacon; on occasions rice was boiled and served with a little brown sugar. Nothing could be wasted — food was too scarce.³⁴

The cows were milked in the morning and the milk left over from breakfast was hung in a bucket under the wagon. Sometimes there was butter and buttermilk for the evening meal.³⁵

At Fort Laramie we laid over the next day, and had our wagons unloaded and thoroughly cleaned from the dust and dirt; then they were reloaded so as to balance their loading anew. All sick cattle were doctored, while the female portion of camp washed and did considerable baking. The next day we proceeded on to the Black Hills, in good spirits, the people generally well and encouraged. The road then began to be rough and gravelly, so that the cattle began to get sore-footed, and that changed the tone of feelings of some of the people.

We went on in peace over hills and dales to the Sweetwater, thence up that stream to what we called the last crossing, where we stopped one day, and again overhauled our load, doctored sick cattle, baked, etc. From there we crossed the summit of the great Rocky Mountains to Pacific Springs, so called because their waters flow down the plains and saleratus deserts, to the Little Sandy, then to what was called the Big Sandy, and thence to Green River; the last hundred miles being the most soul-trying of the whole journey, owing to being sandy and poisonous to the stock. We traveled day and night, all that the cattle could endure, and, in fact, more than many of the people did endure without much complaint and fault-finding.

After a day's rest on the Green River, however, and being told that there was no more such country to cross, the train entered on the last hundred and fifty miles of the

journey, crossing over to Ham's Fork, then to Fort Bridger on Black's Fork, and on to the two Muddy's and to Quaking Asp Ridge, the highest point to be crossed by the emigrant road. From there we went down into Echo Canyon, thence to Weber River, crossed it and over the foothills to East Canyon Creek and to the foot of the Big Mountain, where we met Apostles John Taylor and F. D. Richards. A halt was called to listen to the hearty welcome and words of cheer from the apostles. Then the company passed over the Big Mountain to the foot of Little Mountain, where we camped. Many of the people were sick from eating chokecherries and wild berries found along the roadside.³⁶

Of their visit to the pioneer companies on the trail, the two apostles filed a report which appeared in the *Deseret News* on Monday, September 12th, from which we excerpt the following:

The company was generally healthy and some of the young people were very joyous and jubilant. There were among them many beautiful singers, who entertained us in the evening around their campfires with some of the late popular airs, and among the rest several amusing handcart songs, the chorus of which was —

Some must push, and some must pull,
As we go rolling up the hill;
Thus merrily on the way we go,
Until we reach the Valley, O!

And as they started next morning they, in their prompt energetic action and uniform movements, manifested a vivacity and life which comported very much with the spirit of their song. We had a very pleasant meeting with them and gave them such counsel as their circumstances seemed to require.

On the morning of the second of September we met six wagons belonging to the handcart company that had been left behind at the Devil's Gate to recruit. These ox teams were not able to keep up with the handcarts.

We met Capt. R. F. Neslen's company at their first encampment on Black's Fork, fifteen miles west of Green River, Saturday evening, the third of September. Next morning as the rear of Capt. Neslen's company was rolling out, the forepart of Capt. Edward

Stevenson's company came in view. We found the statement in relation to their lack of provision and being crippled in regard to cattle to be false. The captains of these trains informed us that their camps had been well supplied with provisions until that time, and that although they had lost a number of cattle, their losses were not as severe as most other trains, and that they were making very good time. We found the companies in good health and spirits and their oxen in tolerable condition.³⁷

Have you ever tried to imagine the feelings and reactions of our pioneers to their new environment? What were their reactions to the sight of the high, snow-covered Uinta Mountains to the south of the trail as they trudged through southwestern Wyoming? Denmark was low and flat; its highest altitude reaching only 560 feet. Or what would you say to the July and August heat on the dusty trail if you were used to a rather mild climate where the greater part of the country is exposed to the temperature of the sea and summer highs average only 59 degrees Fahrenheit.³⁸

One story of the trek across the Plains of our own family has come down to us as follows:

One day one of the [Mouritsen family's] oxen gave out and one of the cows was put in the harness as a substitute. Mariah, the oldest girl, would drive the worn-out oxen and cows behind the rest of the company. Sometimes they would get so far behind as to lose sight of the rest of the company altogether. The children walked most of the way, pulling grass and feeding the animals to keep them moving along and not allowing them to stop and graze. On this day one cow could not keep up with the wagon train, so Mariah went on ahead with the other animals and Mourits and his sister Jane were assigned by their father to stay behind and try to herd this cow along as fast as they could make her walk. However, the cow soon laid down and they couldn't get her up again. Darkness came and the coyotes began to howl. Remember that Mourits was only ten and Jane was only six at this time; they had probably already witnessed many frightening incidents involving Indians and wild animals. These children prayed like they had never prayed before. After a long time their father



Mourits and Jane Mouritsen left in charge of the lame cow. Sketch by Connie Mouritsen Wilcox.

came back along the trail looking for them; they were so happy to see their family again.³⁹

Again, it is interesting to pause and consider the setting into which our pioneers were coming. What were the major happenings in Utah in 1859 when our family arrived here? A quick rundown of significant events follows:

- introduction of the Deseret Alphabet.
 - settlement of Heber City, Midway, Charleston, Moroni, Mt. Pleasant, Plain City, Logan, Wellsville, Smithfield, and Richmond, Utah.
 - Great Salt Lake Base and Meridian Rock placed at the corner of South Temple and Main Street in Salt Lake City from which all markings and surveys of the West have since been made.
 - the Eagle Gate was erected near the southwestern corner of Brigham Young's property in Salt Lake City.
 - Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, visited Utah.
 - Johnston's Army continued residence at Camp Floyd, southwest of Salt Lake City.⁴⁰
- The arrival of new pioneer companies in the Salt Lake Valley was a festive occasion. Often bands were assembled along the final route to the pioneer camping grounds which then was called Union Square (now the Salt Lake City and County Building Square). Usually food had been prepared for supper and breakfast by the bishops and Relief Society women of several different wards to welcome the tired and hungry travelers.



The Mourits Mouritsen home located at First North and Main Street in Smithfield, Utah. This later became the Rob Griffiths home:

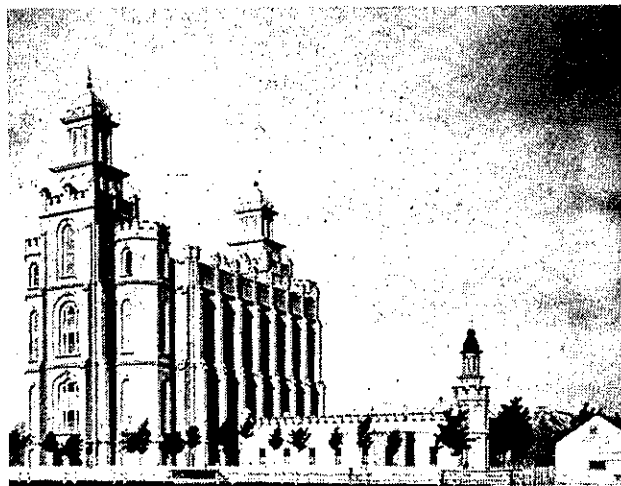
during these years, although he couldn't read a note. Whenever he heard a new tune, he would get his violin as soon as supper was over, and would practice until he could play it. Mourits loved dances. In fact, he used the large upper room in his home for that very purpose. His daughter Mary said that her father used to pay her a nickel to stay home and take care of Eliza whenever there was a dance. Mourits also bought himself a beautiful span of horses with a harness trimmed with bright buckles and a new buggy.⁵¹

Family tradition says that his father approached him at this time and advised him that there were as yet no male heirs to carry on the Mouritsen name; and that due to his comfortable circumstances he ought to consider marriage again. Whether Mourits was approached by others or whether he reached this decision on his own remains unclear. However, he decided to marry again, and to marry under the order of polygamy.

On October 22, 1885 Mourits was married and sealed to Susan Elizabeth Wildman and Karen Hansen in the Logan Temple.⁵² (Hereafter I will refer to these two wives as Lizzie and Carrie, for so they were called.) Although this practice of polygamy brought condemnation and legal action against the Mormon Church and those who adhered to this practice by the federal government and non-Mormon society, it also provided the way for the establishment of a Mormon cul-

ture and society in sufficient strength to preclude its demise or extermination by outside forces. Congressional action in 1862 had already declared polygamy illegal, but there was no effective way to enforce such a law on a territory so remote from Washington. The settlement of the Utah War between the army (representing the federal government) and Brigham Young (representing the Mormons) had brought a period of nearly twenty years' truce, during which time polygamous marriages continued unchecked. In 1882 Congress passed an even more restrictive law (the Edmunds-Tucker Act) against polygamous marriages. Those who were contracting these marriages at this time clearly understood the mounting outside pressure and censures against them. To mistakenly view them as faint-hearted womanizers with questionable moral standards is a great injustice; they were obedient to a basic tenet of their religious belief, and had the moral courage and the physical and emotional strength to accept the responsibilities that accompanied this action. Mourits was certainly no exception, for in retrospect we can see that his life from this point on represents a sacrifice of worldly status, comfort, and economic well-being to fulfill the duties, responsibilities, and obligations that he accepted at this time in his life.

It was the custom that the first wife must give



The Logan Temple (early). The size of the trees indicates that this is approximately how the temple looked when Mourits married Susan E. Wildman and Karen Hansen here in 1885. Used by permission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

her approval to any subsequent marriages of her husband. In our case there is no doubt that Lizzie and Carrie knew each other well; they were both from Smithfield pioneer families. The fact that they each accepted the other and loved each other like sisters has been attested to by the children of both women. Lizzie was the older of the two and her marriage was recorded in the temple record. Carrie's marriage was recorded in a second book of marriages kept by the temple officials. This second book was kept separately as a precaution to protect those men who had plural marriages recorded therein. It was feared that federal agents might seek legal means (search warrants, etc.) to seize the temple marriage records as evidence of law-breaking by the Mormon men. Thus, only one marriage was recorded in the first book and then only if this marriage met the standards of federal law; all other marriages were recorded in the second book which was kept hidden and protected by oath of those who officiated in the Logan Temple.⁵³ Mourits brought his wives home to his house in Smithfield, there to be joined by his two daughters, Mary and Eliza. It is interesting to note that Mourits was now thirty-six; his wives were twenty-three and seventeen respectively; and his daughters were now thirteen and nine.

At this same time Mourits received a mission call to Denmark. Whether he knew of this call prior to his marriages we do not know, but within two and a half weeks of his marriages he was in Salt Lake City on his way to the mission field. Picture, if you will, the family's situation with two wives, two step-daughters, and Mourits (who is the only element common to all) now leaving for two years. A tribute of the highest order is due these women who lived together in love and harmony. It was said, "This was a hard time for all of us, as we had very little to live on, but neither Aunt Lizzie nor Aunt Carrie ever complained."⁵⁴

The Smithfield Ward records indicate that Elder Mourits Mouritsen was set apart for a mission to Europe on November 9, 1885.⁵⁵ The blessing was given under the hands of Apostle John Henry Smith and Francis M. Lyman (Apostle Smith being mouth) at the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City on Monday, November 9, 1885 as follows:

Brother Mourits Mouritsen; We, the servants of the Lord, lay our hands upon your

head and inasmuch as you have been called by the spirit of revelation to perform a mission to Scandinavia, we set you apart to this mission and ministry, praying God our Eternal Father to bless you and preserve you in your journeys, that you may go in peace and safety, that when you arrive in that land you may be enabled to go forth and perform the responsibilities that are placed upon your shoulders through your calling even as a swift messenger of righteousness to the nations of the earth, to flee from the wrath to come.

And we say unto you: Inasmuch as you will observe to do the will of the Lord, your mind shall be lit up with the rays of the Spirit, and those with whom you mingle shall recognize in you a servant of God, empowered to officiate in the ordinances of the Gospel, to teach and instruct the principles thereof, even the first principles, leaving the mysteries of the kingdom alone; to teach and instruct the people in the doctrines the Lord has revealed and that are known as among the primary principles leading the way of salvation.

And we say unto you: That those whom you baptize shall receive the witness of the Spirit, inasmuch as you administer the ordinance in harmony with the laws of God, that those upon whom you lay your hands shall receive the Holy Ghost; they shall speak in tongues and enjoy the gifts of the spirit that are bestowed through the bestowal of that Holy Ghost.

You shall have joy and satisfaction in your ministrations. You shall be preserved by land and by sea, or by whatever means you may travel. You may be successful in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, and the spirit and power of God shall be with you. You shall be warned and forewarned of dangers, and you shall know and understand those who would do you injury and be able to read them by the Spirit, for your mind shall be enlightened through your faithfulness in observing strictly every law that has been made known to you in the due time of the Lord.

We bless you with power and light and knowledge and understanding, and with faith to go forward and discharge those duties, going in peace and returning in

Holiness to the Lord.

TO ALL PERSONS TO WHOM THIS LETTER SHALL COME:

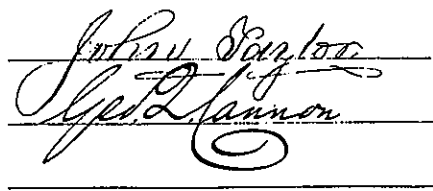
This Certifies that *the bearer, Elder*
Mourits Mouritsen *is in full faith and*
fellowship with the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS, and by the General Authorities of said Church has been
duly appointed to a Mission to *Europe* *—*
to PREACH THE GOSPEL and Administer in all the Ordinances
thereof pertaining to his office.

And we invite all men to give heed to his Teachings and
Counsels as a man of GOD, sent to open to them the Door of Life
and Salvation—and assist him in his travels, in whatsoever
things he may need.

And we pray GOD, THE ETERNAL FATHER, to bless
Elder *Mouritsen* *— and all who receive him,*
and minister to his comfort, with the blessings of Heaven and
Earth, for time and all eternity, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.
Amen.

SIGNED AT SALT LAKE CITY, TERRITORY OF UTAH,

Nov 29th A.D. 1885, in behalf of said Church.


 } First Presidency.

peace, ministering among the people and gathering in the honest in heart, testifying of the mission of Joseph Smith and of the restoration of the Gospel through him; of the first principles thereof, leaving those other and more advanced principles for them to be conversant with in after time.

Set an example that is worthy of emulation. Take no liberties with any female. Keep yourself free in this respect. Observe strictly the word of wisdom: Use no intoxicant. Use no tobacco. Use no tea, but use those things that are for the nourishing and strengthening of your body, and the blessing of God shall be upon you.

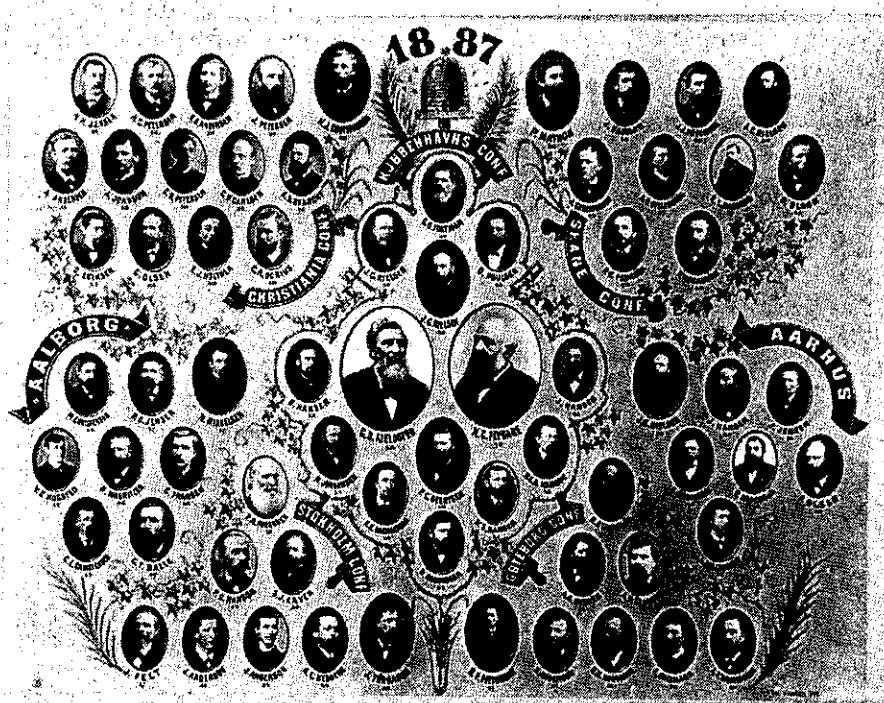
We set you apart to this mission, sealing and confirming upon you all the blessings that have been pronounced upon your head in the past, by virtue of the Holy Priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.⁵⁶

The history of the Scandinavian Mission records that in 1885 fifty Utah Elders were called as missionaries to Scandinavia. Listed among them is Mouritz Mouritzen of Smithfield who arrived

at Copenhagen, Denmark on December 1, 1885 in company with Swen Ole Nilsson of Fairview, Niels Mikkelsen of Fountain Green, Victor Chas. Högsted of Harrisville, James J. Anderson of Fountain Green, Peter Olson of Moroni, Rudolph Ström of Mt. Pleasant, Nils Oscar Gylenskog of Smithfield, and Hemming Hansen of Spring City.

Mouritz was appointed to serve in the Aalborg Conference along with his first cousin, Victor Charles Hegsted, the son of his uncle, Hans C. Sorensen Hegsted.

The record states: "In the beginning of the year 1886, it seemed as if the Elders would not be permitted to do missionary work in Denmark, as the government had decided to banish the Elders. Although one more Elder was banished from Denmark in 1886, and several others had been arrested and brought before the police courts, they had been set at liberty, and then had continued their labors as missionaries. The authorities of the land, being well aware that the Saints were loyal and law-abiding people, who sustained the government and took no part in



The Scandinavian Missionaries in 1887. Used by permission of the Historian's Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mouritz is found on the lower left in the Aalborg Conference. His age is listed as 38 under his picture. To his left is his first cousin, Victor Hegsted, the son of his mother's brother.

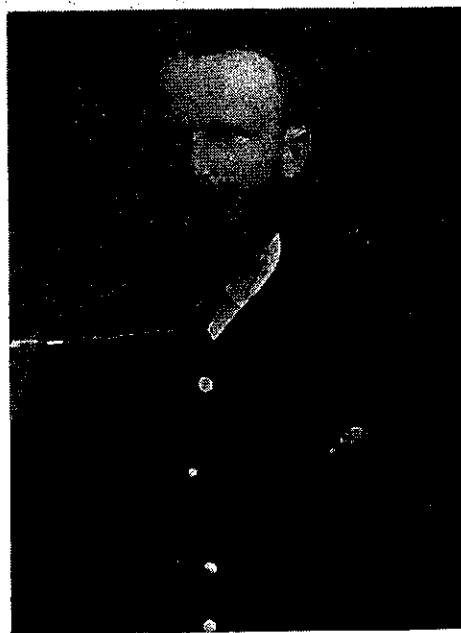
political agitation, became convinced that the banishment of "Mormon" missionaries was not in keeping with the general spirit of the country. The Latter-day Saints in Denmark were not found in drinking saloons or other places of bad repute; they were not brought before any court and convicted of crime, but were found to do what the gospel teaches, viz., be honest, sober, industrious, virtuous, and altogether a God-fearing people."

Little else is recorded of Mourits's missionary experiences or with what success his labors in Denmark were rewarded; however, one story has come down to us relating to his reunion with his relatives. Mourits was assigned to labor in the vicinity of Aalborg, and so took the opportunity of locating his relatives at Staun where his father was born and raised. He located the home of one of his uncles and announced himself as their relative from America. The old man had never before seen Mourits and refused to acknowledge him as a nephew. Finally he agreed that if Mourits could play a certain tune on the violin the same as his father Lars, then (and only then) would he believe that Mourits was really his nephew. Their son named Christian was sent out to borrow a violin. Mourits was soon playing the familiar Danish tune, and Uncle Niels acknowledged that he was indeed their own kin. Though his Danish relatives were always hospitable and enjoyed his visits, they were never receptive to the message of the Restored Gospel.⁵⁷

Of his return from Scandinavia we read that "a company of emigrating Saints destined for Utah (165 souls), together with eight returning missionaries, sailed from Copenhagen, August 18, 1887, per steamship *Bravo* under the direction of Jens C. Nielsen of Moroni, Utah, a returning elder. The names of the other returning elders were: Johan L. Berg, Joseph Anderson, Peter Anderson, Christian Frandsen, James J. Anderson, Mouritz Mouritzen, and Hemming Hansen. The passage of this company of emigrants across the North Sea was pleasant in the early part of the voyage, and the Saints frequently grouped on the deck, singing hymns and enjoying themselves. On Friday evening a brisk wind sprung up which soon put the sea into an uproar, causing violent heavings of the vessel and universal seasickness among the passengers. However, on Sunday morning, August 21st, the ship arrived in Hull, but owing to low water could not cross the bar

until the evening. The steamship *Rolla* which had sailed from Christiania, August 19th, with thirty-two emigrating Saints in charge of Elder Anthon Anderson, arrived in Hull about the same time, and the two companies being united then constituted 198 Saints, besides nine returning missionaries. On Monday morning, August 22nd, the emigrants passed through the custom house in Hull, and then continued the journey by rail to Liverpool, where they arrived in the afternoon of the same day and were taken to a hotel on Kent Square. In Liverpool the emigrants went on board the steamship *Wisconsin*, together with emigrating Saints and returning elders from the British Isles (about 400 souls in all), in charge of Elder John I. Hart, a returning elder. The company, after a safe voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, arrived in New York, August 27th. Thence, the journey was continued to Salt Lake City, Utah.⁵⁸

When Mourits arrived home he found the situation altered somewhat. He was greeted by his fourteen-month-old son Edward who was born while Mourits was in the missionfield. Edward was the first of his eight children by Lizzie. He also found that Utah (including Cache Valley) was flooded with federal marshalls. Apparently



Mourits Mouritsen, believed to have been taken in Denmark during his mission. The beard and mustache appear for the first time in his missionary picture.

the government was determined to take action against Mormon polygamists as a result of additional Congressional action taken earlier that year. Most of the men were forced to hide and curtail their normal activities, which made it extremely difficult to support a family. They all knew that to be "caught" or arrested meant to be convicted, because they would not, under oath, deny their plural wives. Mourits couldn't afford to let this happen.

Mourits had his farm up Smithfield Canyon which his father and Joseph Merrill (his nephew) had operated while he was on his mission; the principal crop was sugar cane.⁵⁹ Mourits was probably anxious to get his farm plowed before winter so that he could get in an early crop. One day while plowing his farm a friend informed him that the law was hot on his trail and just a few minutes away. Without hesitation Mourits took his best work horse, unharnessed it, except for the bridle, jumped on, and made way for the top of the canyon. He crossed over the top of Bear River Divide, rode down Logan Canyon, and continued on to Bear Lake. At that time there were no trails or roads out of the top of the canyon, and with all the brush and steep hills it is indeed amazing how Mourits ever got through. This is no doubt the greatest single feat of horsemanship ever to take place in the (Smithfield) canyon.⁶⁰

It was obvious that Mourits could not remain in Smithfield. It was agreed that Lizzie and her baby should remain there in the family home; Mourits, Carrie, and Mary would go to Star Valley, Wyoming to live and Eliza would remain in Smithfield with her Grandmother Hillyard. Mary describes this trip as follows:

Father had some young colts. They put some furniture in the wagon, and we left in the night. We got to Mink Creek the next night and stayed with Aunt Carrie's brother, Hans Hansen. The horses rested a day, and the next day Uncle Hans put his good team on our wagon and pulled us to the top of the mountain. There wasn't a road up Strawberry Canyon then. It snowed that day, and when we got to Emigration Canyon we couldn't see the road through the pines. The horses were give out, so Father walked and drove the team. Aunt Carrie and I walked behind the wagon, and when the horses

couldn't go further and stopped, we put rocks under the wheels to hold the wagon. When we were nearly to the top of the summit, we heard a terrible noise in the trees. We did not have a gun. Father told us to get in the wagon. The next pull put us on top of the summit. We came to a house at the mouth of the canyon about 2:00 o'clock in the morning. Father went to the house and asked if we could stay. It was my mother's cousin's house, Heber Thompson. They took us in, and we stayed a few days with them.

There was a sawmill in a nearby canyon where Father could log and sell the logs to the mill. Bishop Austin had a one-room log house which he let us live in without rent, so we lived in Liberty that winter. In the spring we moved to Austin's dairy four miles north of Liberty, Idaho. There we had a house to live in free, a garden spot, and our butter, cheese, cream and milk free.⁶¹

Today this area is called Sharon, and it was here that Carrie's first child, a son Victor, was born. Shortly after this Mary returned to Smithfield to live with her grandmother Hillyard. Mourits moved about ten miles straight east across the valley to a ranch about a mile east of Bennington, Idaho. Mourits had obviously given up the idea of moving to Star Valley. Here they lived on what was known as the old Hunter place; and it was here that Carrie's second child, a son Olean, was born. Soon thereafter they moved a mile farther east to what has always been known since as the "Old Mouritsen Ranch."



The log cabin on the Hunter place east of Bennington where Olean was born. The family lived here for a very short time.

Of this house, his son Homer writes:

The old part of the house was built of logs and was probably on the place when Father first went to the Bennington ranch to live in about 1890. The log house consisted of two relatively large rooms and an attached shanty which was used for a kitchen in the summer. The family lived here until about 1908-1909, when an additional room was added on the south of the log house. This addition was about 18' x 26' and was built of native lumber sawed from logs Father had hauled out of the canyon. Sawdust was poured in between the boards in the walls and served quite well for insulation; but when the boards shrank the sawdust would trickle out of the cracks and would have to be swept off the floor. Later on a cloth called "factory" was nailed on the ceiling and walls, and then the walls and ceiling could be white-washed to keep the house looking neat and clean.⁶²

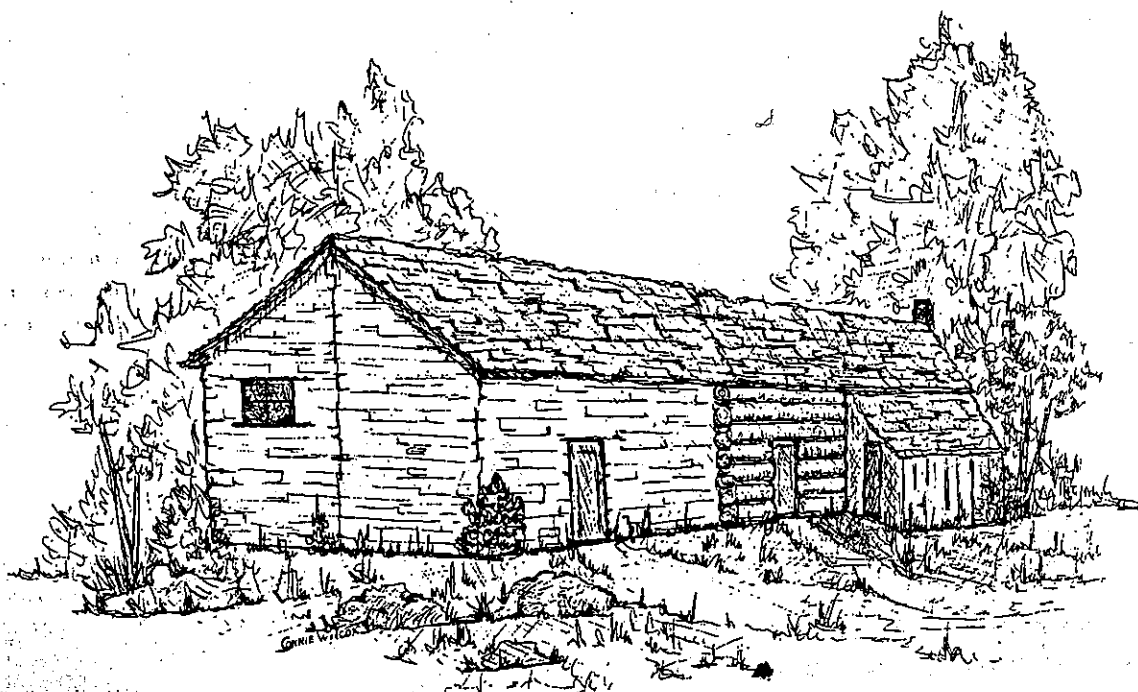
Victor further described this house as follows:

I can see in my mind now the old floor of native red pine, worn thin every place except

where the knots were, but always spotlessly clean. Even though the roof leaked and spotted the walls and ceilings, the house was made to look the best it could. At least twice a year the walls and ceilings were white-washed. So our home was always clean and sweet even though it was a dirt-roofed log house.⁶³

For approximately the next five or six years Mourits managed to travel back and forth between his family in Smithfield and his family in Idaho. Susan became known as Aunt Lizzie to Carrie's family, Mary, and Eliza; likewise, Carrie became known as Aunt Carrie. Lizzie had four more children while she lived in Smithfield — Vara, David, and a set of twins, Gwendolyn and Glendale. Carrie had added her first daughter to her family with the birth of Elvina in 1892. Victor describes the family at this time:

I can plainly recollect the first time I ever saw my father; that is, the first time I was conscious of knowing who he was. He was sitting in his favorite chair leaning back against the wall, just on the west side of our old kitchen stove called "early breakfast."



The Mouritsen Family home the first home built on the Ranch at Bennington, Idaho. Sketch by Connie Mouritsen Wilcox.

This was in the morning. He had been working at the lime kiln all night. Mother was preparing breakfast. He had a heavy brown beard — not like the thin, gray beard we remember in the later years of his life. The next plain memory I have of him was when he came into "the other room" (we had only two rooms, so when we were in one of them, the other one was always referred to as "the other room") and told me that I had a baby sister. That was Vina, of course.⁶⁴

Mourits tried to take his older children back and forth on his trips between Smithfield and Bennington to help the children in both families get better acquainted. Finally in November 1893 Lizzie moved to Bennington. At first they all lived together at the ranch. Victor remembers one Christmas spent there when they were all together:

Aunt Lizzie had five children and Mother had four. They gave us a very enjoyable Christmas. I'm sure the parents also enjoyed it. Edward and I induced Pa to hang up his sock on Christmas Eve, the same as the children were doing. We reasoned that he might as well be in on the deal for whatever Santa Claus had to give away. The next morning his sock had a stick of wood in it. Of course, we thought that was a good joke on him.⁶⁵

In due time Mourits had a Brother Van Orman



The Mouritsen Family home in Bennington, Idaho. This home was later known as the Chet Burbank home.

build a house for Lizzie in Bennington, where she lived until she moved to Montpelier in 1903. This house was later known as the Chet Burbank home. It was here that Birtie and Alnora were born. Leah was also born in this house. During this period Mildred, Willard, Irvin, and Homer had been added to Carrie's family. Mourits's daughters, Mary and Eliza, had married in 1894 and 1895 respectively.

About 1897 or 1898 Mourits purchased a white-top buggy. Victor relates the following:

There was a Hansen reunion [Carrie's family] over at Mink Creek [Idaho]. Pa had just bought a new white-top buggy, and its initial trip was over to this reunion. I'm sure this was the most luxurious trip any of us had ever experienced except Pa, who I understand used to have a white-top buggy and a nice team — considering the old plugs he had to put up with from the time we came along. It seemed about as near like heaven as anything one could imagine. Why not? We had a shade over our heads, cushions (though thin) on the seats, and springs on the axles. We had scarcely gotten started along the road until I said to Pa and Ma, "I don't see how anyone can stand to ride in a wagon." This naturally provoked a good laugh with them. Anyway, it was really an enjoyable trip, especially for Mother to be able to meet her parents and other relatives in only one day's travel from home.⁶⁶

Mourits managed to support this large family by alternating between lime-burning and general ranching, which included stock-raising and fruit and vegetable production. He also did some freight hauling. But there were many times when the next meal was in question as Victor relates:

Picture in your mind a mother and four or five children sitting around the hearth at night waiting for Father to come home with some flour and coal oil that they might have a light and some biscuits. Sometimes it would be ten o'clock, sometimes eleven, and sometimes even later; but Father never came home without the bacon or the flour and the kerosene. Our hunger was always satisfied before we went to bed.⁶⁷

Sometimes when all of his own initiative, industry, and thrift failed, help came from other

sources. Mourits's granddaughter Venna relates the following incident:

My father, William H. Cantwell, related this story to me as it was told to him by Mourits Mouritsen. Because my father could not find suitable work in Utah, he and my mother Eliza moved to Bennington, Idaho to be near Grandpa Mourits Mouritsen.

In the fall of 1899 there was a crop failure. To help make up for this failure the men went up the canyon and hauled out timber from which they made fence posts. They worked all through the fall months and into the winter, selling all the fence posts they could. But, as the winter lengthened, times looked bad for them as their money and food dwindled away. At last the wheat was all gone. Where would they obtain the means to provide for their families?

One night before going to bed, Mourits knelt down beside his bed to ask the help of the Lord in providing food for his family. During the night he had a dream. He dreamt that he hitched his two horses to a sleigh and filled it with fence posts. He then drove down the road towards Montpelier. On the way he saw a man coming towards him with a load of wheat. When they met the man wanted to trade his wheat for the fence posts. Mourits awoke convinced that he had received an answer to his prayers.

He went out early the next morning and hitched the horses to his sleigh. Then he loaded the sleigh with fence posts. He drove down the road towards Montpelier. When he came to the place he had seen in his dream he waited. Shortly, he saw another sleigh approaching. When the other sleigh met him and stopped, the other man said, "Mourits, how would you like to trade that load of fence posts for my wheat here? I need to make a fence in the spring, and I have more wheat than I can use." So they both got down, moved the fence posts to the other sleigh, and moved the wheat into Grandpa's sleigh. Mourits then drove to the mill and had enough flour ground to feed them until they could raise new crops again.⁶⁸

Another source of help during these years came from Mourits's daughter Mary who had married Robert Griffiths. She had purchased

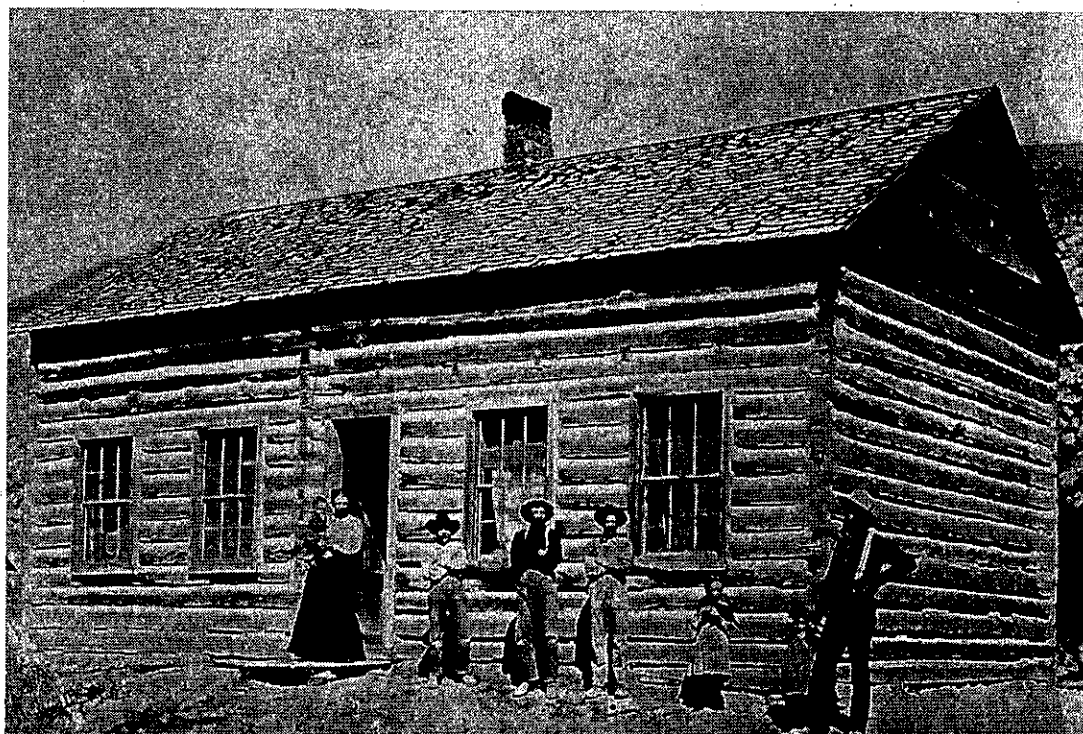
Mourits's home in Smithfield over a period of time, and in 1895 she and Rob moved into the house. Mr. and Mrs. William Mack had rented it from the time that Lizzie moved to Idaho. Eventually Mary and Rob developed a hotel and mercantile business on their corner property. Each summer they would make a trip by wagon or buggy over to the Ranch, bringing food, treats, and gifts for all the family; it was almost like a holiday when Mary and Rob would arrive at the Ranch.

Mourits's daughter Nora remembers the following:

Mary and Rob had a hotel and boarding house. Some of the roomers would give Mary their discarded and worn clothing. I suppose other people gave her things too, because about twice a year she would send us boxes. It was just like Christmas. We would all gather around for the opening to see if there was anything for us. There were usually beads, or dolls, or something for each one besides the clothing. Mother [Lizzie] was a real good seamstress and could utilize everything Mary sent. I don't remember having very many clothes that weren't made over until I was nearly grown. Most of the time we were as well, or better, dressed than most of the crowd.⁶⁹

In the spring of 1903 Lizzie moved to Montpelier because Mourits had started burning lime there as he felt he could get a better grade of lime from this rock than what he had been working with in Bennington. Their house is still standing at the top of Main Street below "M" hill (2nd Street) in Montpelier. While she and her family lived here, her last child Roy was born. The following year Carrie gave birth to Leah at Bennington.

In the spring of 1906 Mourits made a trip to Smithfield; shortly after he came home he complained of not feeling well. Up until this time he had never experienced any illness in his life. He was now fifty-seven years old. He kept getting worse so rapidly that the doctor was called; the case was diagnosed as spotted fever. Doctors seemed to know very little about how to treat such cases in those days, so such diseases just seemed to run their natural course, which was about two months. This disease was a good deal like typhoid fever, with the added affliction of spots, blotches,



The Mouritsen Family home in Montpelier, Idaho. Located at the northeast corner of Main and 2nd Street. This picture was taken about 1904 while Mourits and the boys were working at the lime kiln in Montpelier. Left to right, Susan Elizabeth (Aunt Lizzie) holding Roy, Glendale, Victor, David, Birtie and Nora holding Mourits' hand.

and sores on the body. For the last two weeks before he started to improve these sores were not only on his body, but also in his mouth and throat, and probably on his lungs. For about two weeks he was unable to speak or take any nourishment at all. A less sturdy constitution wouldn't have survived such an ordeal. Because of his great faith in the Priesthood, and especially his faith in the administration of the elders in the case of sickness, he did get well and lived for sixteen more years. But they were difficult and trying years for Mourits.

In July of 1907 Carrie was expecting her ninth child. On July 12 she died of complications following the birth of a baby girl. The baby died also. Mother and infant were buried in the same casket in the Bennington Cemetery. Nora provides us with a vivid recollection of this period of time in Mourits' life:

My first recollection of the Ranch was at a very sad time in the history of our family. It was the time of Aunt Carrie's funeral. I was about six years old at the time and didn't

really sense what was going on. It seemed we arrived at the Ranch in a buggy or wagon; I don't remember which. We unloaded at the corner of the lawn, and there were people everywhere.

We had lived in Montpelier and Aunt Carrie's family lived on the Ranch. After Aunt Carrie passed away, Mother and her children moved to the Ranch. Mother had eight children and Aunt Carrie left eight, so there were sixteen of us and Mother and Dad made eighteen.⁷⁰

Nora goes on to describe how a family of this size accommodated themselves to their circumstances as follows:

Our home consisted of two large rooms — one was the bedroom and the other room was called the "other room" because it was a little of everything. One corner of this room was partitioned off for the kitchen. The other corner by the kitchen had a curtain to pull across which concealed a folding bed for

Mother and Dad. When the bed was folded up this corner also served as a bathroom where we had our washstand and bathtub, which consisted of the "old tin tub." The rest of this room served as a dining room and living room. The furniture consisted of a cot and several chests, a large table, and Dad's chair; it also contained a large heating stove, which consumed large quantities of wood to keep the house warm. It seemed a never-ending job to keep the wood boxes full. This job fell to us younger members of the family who weren't old enough to do much else.

The bedroom was a really large room made of logs and was white-washed inside. It had factory cloth tacked to the rafters for a ceiling. There was a bed in each of the four corners and cots along the sides. Depending on the number of children at home, beds were also made on the floor. (Some of the older children would go out and work for other people when a job was available.) There were no closets; each person had a nail in the wall on which to hang his clothes. Each child had one drawer for himself. In the summer the boys would sleep in the loft of the barn, which made more room in the house for the rest.

My bed was in one corner. We each had our treasures on shelves above our beds. One morning I was awakened by a noise and something hit me in the face. I raised up in time to see a big mountain rat run off the bed. It had its nest in the corner of the ceiling. The factory cloth had come loose, and he had tumbled down the corner and knocked all of my treasures (which consisted of cups and saucers, a vase, and doll's head) down in my face.

We also had a shanty that was used in the summer for a kitchen. It contained a stove and a long table which was nailed to the wall on one side and had a wooden bench along the front. I remember lining up along the table for supper. As many as would fit on the bench would eat, and then the next relay would sit down and eat until all were fed. They would serve either milk dumplings, Danish hot cakes, lumpy dick, sweet soup, potato soup, or germade mush. Dad would eat his mush with sugar and a big lump of

butter in the center of the plate. He would drink vinegar water with it. We children drank our vinegar water with a little soda added, and drank it while it fizzed.

Just off the shanty there was a bridge that crossed a large creek that ran close to the house. Dad built a large root cellar just across the creek where our winter supply of fruit, milk, and butter, etc. was kept. In the summer it was used to keep our strawberries and other fruit cool until we got enough picked to make a buggy load for Dad to take to Montpelier to sell.

The barnyard was a large circle of ground surrounded by the barn and shed on the west, corrals, chicken coops, and cow sheds on the north, the granary and pigpens on the east, and root cellars and rock cellar on the south. The circle, or center, was used to stack the hay and grain, and was a place for the wagons and machinery. In the fall the thresher would be set up there too.

The creek served as a dividing line between the house and barnyard. A few hundred feet east from the footbridge was a bridge for the buggies and wagons. The creek was lined on both sides by a thicket of wild roses, serviceberries, chokecherries, quakenasp, wild ferns, and flowers. This made a beautiful setting for the many games we used to play, such as Moonlight-Starlight, Any Bears in the Woods Tonight, Run-Sheep-Run, Charades, Blind Man's Bluff, and Down Yonder.

Our closest neighbors were the Astle family. They lived about a mile southeast of us. Their family consisted of ten children who were about the same ages as we were. They would come down and spend the evening, which made more fun for all.

The straw stack was a never-ending joy to us children. We would play there while the cows were being milked. If you have never played in a straw stack you don't know what you have missed. It also furnished stuffing for the bed ticks, which were changed spring and fall. It also furnished padding under the homemade carpet for the floor. When the straw ticks were first filled the beds were so high we almost needed a ladder to get up on them, but by spring they would all be worn

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down so the bed was lumpy, and the straw would have to be stirred around and shook up to make the bed comfortable.

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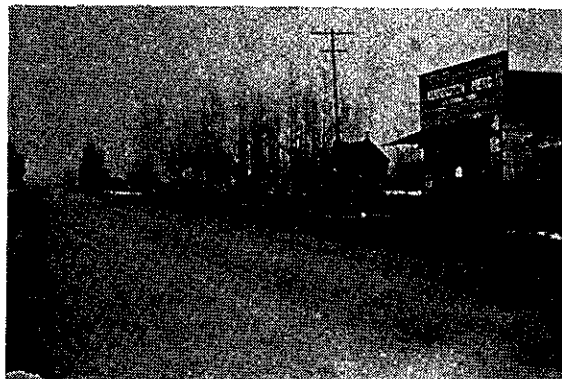
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Threshing time on the Ranch was a gala affair for us children, but a real headache for Mother and Dad, with Dad managing the affairs of the thrashing and Mother and the older girls trying to feed everyone. The thrasher consisted of a large machine called the separator, into which they fed the bundles of grain. The wheat or grain came out of a spout on the side, and the straw came out on a long carrier that took it up onto the straw stack. It was all powered by a turbine center with four long poles extending from it to which four teams of horses were hitched and driven around and around in a circle. This somehow made the thrasher go. It all made so much noise you couldn't hear each other talk. The thrasher crew consisted of about fourteen men, so with our family there was a large crowd to feed. I remember we would mix eight to ten loaves of bread twice a day and cook a big kettle of beans. Once I remember Mother saying a mutton just lasted two meals. They fed the men and grownups first, and we children always had to wait until last; sometimes most of the goodies were gone.

Dad raised acres and acres of garden of all kinds. In the fall when it was potato-digging time, Dad would dig potatoes all day, graffel them out of the dirt with the bent tines of a pitchfork, and get them all on top of the ground and ready to pick up. When we children got home from school we would pick a wagonbox full every night and sometimes more. This job lasted for weeks until the potatoes were all dug and all the other vegetables were gathered in before frost and winter came. We also had a large patch of corn. One fall the corn was just about ready to use. Dad told Homer to get the cows and be sure to shut the gate. Homer got the cows but forgot to shut the gate, and the cows got in the corn. The next morning Dad was angry at Homer, and we were all afraid about what Dad would do. When he found Homer he happened to have a hoe in his hands and somehow he got it hooked in the suspenders of Homer's overalls. He would push him out and pull him back the full length of the hoe

Scenes of Bennington, Idaho



Main Street looking north.



The Bennington LDS Ward House.



The Bennington Merc which was operated by Vina Mouritsen Weaver for some time.

and say, "You doggone little sawney," which was one of Dad's swear words when he was real angry. Mother finally had to make him stop.

We lived about two and one-half miles east of Bennington. In the fall and spring we had the pleasure of walking this distance to school, to church, and all other meetings and entertainments we wished to attend. In the winter we had a bobsleigh with boards nailed around the top to make a flat seat. In the center were hay, quilts, school lunches, books, and our feet. When it was real cold we would crawl down in the hay and quilts to keep from freezing, as it took about an hour for the team to take us home; it was all uphill.

Sometimes the roads would get real bad. They would fill up with drifts of snow in a blizzard, and by the time spring came they would be built up to the tops of the fences. When the snow started to melt it would leave the road high and narrow. The horses would sometimes fall off the road and not be able to get back on until they were unhitched, and sometimes not until it froze hard enough for the crust of snow to hold them up. So when that happened we would have to walk the rest of the way home.⁷¹

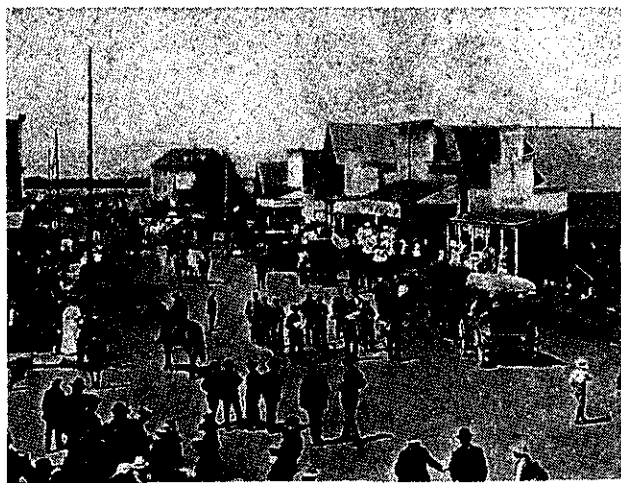
One night Leah and I were walking home, and it was real dark. About halfway between the Ranch and Bennington there was a place where the road crossed from one side of the creek to the other, and the bushes were real thick. We called this place Hunter's Brush. Just as we got there the coyotes began to howl on the other side of the brush. We knew we had to cross over to get home so we kept going. We just got on the other side when Homer came along on a horse. We were real glad to see him, but he told us the coyotes wouldn't hurt us, and just went on home. We went through the brush and weren't quite so scared to go the rest of the way, but we sure thought he was cruel to leave us there for the coyotes.⁷¹

On July 31, 1909 tragedy again visited the family with the drowning death of little Roy. Nora provides us this account of that sad event:

Mary and Rob Griffiths used to come over from Smithfield every summer on a visit. They came in a buggy and brought their tent

and pitched it in the barnyard. They would usually stay a week or more, and sometimes they would bring company with them. One Saturday they arrived and pitched their tent, and everyone had a good visit. Mother and the older girls prepared supper, and the older folks ate. When they called us children in to eat, Roy wasn't with us. It was about dusk. We all set out to hunt for him. No one had seen him for sometime, so they started to drag the pond. It was about eleven o'clock that night before they fished his body out of the water on the end of a long fishing pole that Rob had brought to fish with. They put a barrel west of the rock cellar and rolled his body on it to get the water out of his lungs and revive him, but he had been in the water too long. This was a very sad time for everyone, especially Mother. It was years before she could go near the pond.⁷²

In the fall of that same year (1909) Victor was called on a mission to Denmark. One has only to read Victor's missionary journal to understand the financial sacrifice this represented for Mourits; but with the help of his older children, friends, and relatives, he accomplished it. He must have relived his own missionary experiences through the letters from Denmark as Victor trod



Main Street of Montpelier, Idaho — 24th of July Celebration at the turn of the Century. White-topped buggy in the lower right foreground belonged to Robert Griffiths and Mary Elizabeth Mouritsen from Smithfield, Utah.

the same roads and byways where he had been some twenty-four years earlier.

In 1913 the family was called to mourn the untimely death of Edward, who was the oldest of the Mouritsen boys. Edward had married Ruby Perkins in 1908; they had lived in Montpelier, and Edward worked for the railroad. Edward left two small children and a yet unborn son.

Exactly eight years to the day since Carrie died, Mourits lost yet another son to an early grave. In July 1915 Glendale died from a ruptured appendix at Montpelier, leaving his young wife of only seven months with an unborn son that was never to know his father in this life.

About 1917 Mourits built a new home a short distance east from the little two-room home where they had lived for so long. Mourits had always managed to have a little money in his pockets, but he had saved for years to get money enough to build this home for his large family. He was able to pay for everything by the time the building was done, but it must have taken all the money he could save to accomplish this. Leah and Homer recall this home as follows:

The new home was beautifully situated,

facing west with the trees and mountains in the background and a stream of clear, cold water running close by the house which furnished water for our every need, and was a delight in every way. There were trees, flowers, and greenery along its banks, and the running water was nice to listen to, especially at night with windows open as we slept in our upstairs bedrooms.

The home was large — four bedrooms upstairs, two bedrooms downstairs, a large dining room and kitchen, and a large bathroom. There were many closets. There was also a small basement under the kitchen with a stairway leading down to it.

It took about two years to build the house. The outside work and the roof were done by George Koford, a carpenter from Montpelier, at a cost of \$150. The finishing work was done by Lee Burdick, a carpenter in Bennington. Mr. Burdick was not married and so lived right in our home until the job was finished. All the framing and rough lumber had been milled from logs hauled out of the canyon by Father and the boys. Homer,



Mouritsen Family home, the last home built on the Ranch at Bennington. Left to right, Aunt Lizzie, Nora, and Leah.



An aerial view of the Ranch from the hills to the southeast.

Irvin, and Willard helped a great deal with the building. They shingled the roof with narrow wooden shingles. Homer dropped a hammer into one of the walls in the house, and it must still be there. The older boys were away from home at this time, but they all helped whenever they were back home.⁷³

Mourits kept himself going through these years, determined to meet his responsibilities and raise his family. His strength and vigor seemed somewhat diminished after the bout with the spotted fever, as if that illness had subtracted years from his life. About 1920 he started experiencing health problems again; these problems gradually heightened. He suffered increasingly for nearly twenty-six months. On September 23, 1922, at six in the morning, Mourits Mouritsen passed away at the ranch in Bennington that he loved so dearly. He was buried in the family plot in the Bennington Cemetery, leaving his widow and fifteen children to mourn his loss.⁷⁴

Probably the most candid and insightful view of Mourits was written by his son Victor. I conclude with portions of it because it rounds out our impressions of the man.

It seems to be an established custom, when speaking or writing about someone who has passed on, to exaggerate their good qualities and minimize or skip entirely their failings. Possibly that's the proper course, but it

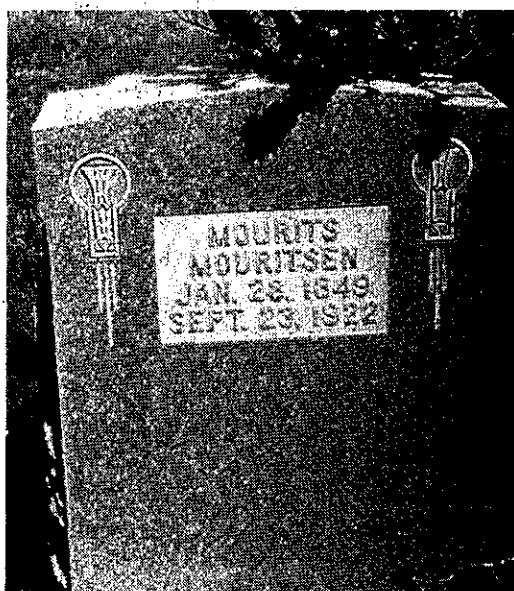


Mourits Mouritsen about 1920. One of the last photos taken of him.

doesn't present an accurate picture of the subject.

While I think our father was far above average, and we're mighty proud of him, I'm not going to try to picture him as being perfect. So far as my children are concerned, I'm proud to have them know of their grandfather just as he was. If they discover that he was human and normal, had some peculiarities, and possibly some failings, I have confidence that it will not lessen their love and esteem for him; for, after all, his peculiarities and failings were negligible as compared to his achievements and constructive accomplishments.

Pa loved his children as much as any parent. But he was not much for fondling them. I don't remember that I ever saw him pick up a child and caress it in his arms just for the pleasure of it, as parents often do. His love was expressed in a more practical and substantial way; that of providing food, clothing, and what comforts he could, and trying to teach them correct principles. There were times when Aunt Lizzie and Mother would hand him "the baby" to hold for a few minutes to help them out, but from my memory and observations that was more of a duty than a pleasure with him. Above all, he didn't want to be bothered with a baby on his lap while eating his meals.



Gravemarker in the Bennington Cemetery for Mourits Mouritsen.

Pa was nearly forty years of age when Vara and I were born. When we stop to consider that he had eleven more children younger than us, it is not to be wondered at that such a large young group would get on his nerves some, and that the relationship would not be quite so intimate as it ordinarily would have been between younger parents and their children.

Our father was outstanding in so many ways that I shall not attempt to characterize more than just a few of them. I do not purport to list them in any coherent manner, but just as they come to mind.

Faith in the gospel and in the priesthood was first with Pa. Whenever he was asked by one of the church authorities to perform some duty in the church he took for granted that it was right. There was no further questioning about it. His children have inherited this same faith to quite an extent — from him and their mother.

Pa could accomplish more work in a day than any man I ever knew. He never got excited about getting out early in the mornings, and he wanted at least an hour in which to enjoy his breakfast. I've seen times that when we were just getting nicely started for the day's work others would be quitting for

noon. Then when we did get started he had no regard whatever for quitting time, which was quite often cause for complaints from his boys. He didn't pretend to follow any kind of schedule as to his working hours and eating time. This often made it inconvenient for Aunt Lizzie and Mother. I'm not speaking for or against this system, but it was *his* system. When the day was over he always had his share of the work done. The hardest work he ever did, and as hard a work as I can think of, was getting logs out of the canyon, and quarrying, hauling, and breaking up lime rock for the lime kiln.

Pa took great interest in and was very successful in vegetable and fruit gardening. He just seemed to have a knack for making garden stuff grow. There was a slogan among his friends at one time that "Mouritsen" would pay one dollar for every weed they could find in his two-acre garden. Most of his children have inherited from him a special liking for gardening, and some of them have been and are now very successful at it.

Although Pa did not read musical notes I claim he was an accomplished violinist. He was by no means the ordinary "Arkansas Fiddler" that you read about. He could play fast jig-time music, but he could also do justice to classical music. When he played "The Mocking Bird," he could almost make you see the bird. He would no doubt have gone a long way in music had circumstances been so he could have directed his energies along that line. His violin playing was many times a pleasant source of entertainment in our home. He also played a great deal for public dances. He also chorded on the piano and organ for dances.

There was one point on which Aunt Lizzie and Mother always disagreed with Pa. He appreciated education and all that, especially practical education, but he never could be fully converted that the boys should attend school when he needed their help on the farm, in the canyon, or at the lime kiln. There were no laws in those days compelling children to attend school. The result was that the oldest boys especially received only three or four months schooling during the winter. I don't know how far the other boys went in school, but I do know that I made it into the

eight grade but never did get out. However, I want to say, in fairness to Pa, that the boys cooperated very agreeably with him on the above arrangement.

Pa enjoyed walking more than any person I ever knew. He was a fast walker and took a pride in it. He used to say, "Watch how light I step," and he did step lightly. Unless he had a considerable distance to go, and if he was going alone, he would prefer walking rather than to hitch up the team or ride on horseback. He has done, but not often, walked from the ranch to Montpelier. On one occasion he walked to Montpelier and carried some small sapling cottonwood trees that he had dug up and was selling and planting them for some people in Montpelier to grow as shade trees. It might have been two or three, or it might have been a half dozen of these small trees he carried to Montpelier. I hope Olean or some of the other children remember this also because I know it sounds fantastic, but it's true. He didn't do this merely because he preferred walking and carrying trees that far, but he had promised the trees. He also needed the money he was going to receive for them. There was some situation so there were no horses available at the ranch that day. I think one such trip is all he ever made.

I really believe that Pa was one person whose dreams meant something. He claimed at different times to have been warned or prompted on matters that concerned him. I shall relate just one case. Pa dreamed one night that he saw a man in our house sawing some boards and nailing them together. It worried him, because in those days when a death occurred in the community a carpenter would make a coffin out of lumber. When Pa saw this man making a box that was what he thought of. The very next day I got my leg broken. Father jumped onto old Paul and rode over the hill to Montpelier to get Doctor Hoover. After the doctor had set my leg and put a plaster-paris cast on it, he rustled some boards and sawed and nailed them together to make a solid cast to hold my leg in place. Pa turned to Mother and said, "There's my dream of last night." While he didn't enjoy my having a broken leg, it was quite a relief that it was not something worse.

As I said in the beginning, Pa also had some peculiarities; none of them serious. But he had a habit of blaming someone else for various things that might go wrong around the ranch; for example, if the cow kicked the milk over, if one of the pigs dodged between our legs while we were trying to pen them, if the horses broke the stackyard gate down during the night, or various other similar situations, he would always blame something or someone else for the circumstances. It seemed to soothe his feelings if only there was someone to lay the blame onto. I imagine the girls will remember how Pa used to say, "I could just see you was gonna drop that dish," or pitcher of milk, or whatever it might have been they were carrying. I remember Gwen, especially, used to say, "Well, why didn't you tell me if you could see I was going to drop it?" But strangely enough he never did think to warn them beforehand.

I'm trusting that no one will take offense if I say that there might have been a little touch of selfishness in our father's disposition, as there is with most everyone else. I can remember little incidents where this was slightly demonstrated. I shall relate one circumstance that is really a little humorous to anyone who knew Pa right well. Our older sisters, Mary and Eliza, sort of trained their father to expect little favors one way or another when he went to see them, or when they came to Bear Lake to see him. On one of our trips to Smithfield Mary gave Pa a good buggy whip — at least to use while he was there driving to Logan and Hyde Park. Just as we were leaving town to come home, Mary came out with another whip and said, "Pa, I want to change whips with you." This one he'd been using belonged to someone else. After we got far enough along the road for him to give the whip a good try-out, he complained quite gruffly that Mary had substituted an inferior whip — and he didn't feel at all good about it.

As I stated, Father had great faith in the priesthood, and especially in the administration of the elders in case of sickness. After he had lain sick with the spotted fever for nearly two months, the last two weeks of which time he was not able to speak, he made Aunt Lizzie and Mother understand that he wanted

Charley Stephens, with some other elder, to come and administer to him. As I remember now, Olean and Glen went to Bennington after Brother Stephens. At any rate, he and Frank Graham came to the ranch and administered to him. Pa said that while they were praying over him (I'm relating this just as he told it to me, and, I assume, to other members of the family) he said it was made known to him that he could pass out of his suffering if he chose, or he could live on for awhile. He said he was so nearly gone and had suffered so much that it was really a temptation to choose to be released from his suffering. But he thought of his family (he then had eleven children under fifteen years of age), and he thought of his debts. In his thoughts he asked the Lord that he might have the privilege of living to get out of debt,

and to see his family grow to maturity. He got well and enjoyed fairly good health for fifteen years after the spotted fever attack. He again experienced illness, with more or less suffering the last two years of his life. He got out of debt, and shortly after his youngest child graduated from high school he passed away, feeling satisfied, I'm sure, that he had to a great extent achieved his purposes in this life.

We love him. We revere his memory. He was a father to be proud of.⁷⁵

And so we close our record of Mourits Mouritsen. His devotion to duty and his sacrifices in this life had truly brought forth the blessings of heaven; but as the years pass these earthly blessings pale in the sight of the eternal reward he was wrought for himself and his posterity.

Endnotes

This history has been compiled from numerous sources, some primary and others representing family histories and memoirs — primary among these are the writings of Mary Elizabeth Mouritsen Griffiths, Vara Mouritsen Lindsay, and Victor Mouritsen. I also acknowledge the research and direction of R. Larry Williams in steering my early efforts towards as many primary sources as time would permit. All films and books are located at the Genealogical Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unless otherwise noted.

Jerald O. Seelos

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